

**Changes in the nature and governance of public spaces in the
historic city centre: the case of Damascus**

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ABSTRACT

Public space is a component of our physical environment which has an important role in city life. This thesis is primarily about investigating public space and public realm in the historic city centre of Damascus in order to understand the potential for its improvement, and secondarily about recommending specific actions towards this. The research takes a qualitative approach focusing on public space as a 'product' which is the result of a process. In terms of the product, the nature, morphological and functional aspects of public spaces in Damascus are examined. The governance process is analysed at local level to define main actors, the rules they interact with and the rationalities they use to intervene in public space. This analysis includes locality-specific literature review and interviews with key informants. Such case study analysis is undertaken against the background of a survey of public space regeneration in selected cities around the Mediterranean.

Public spaces in Damascus historically developed under strong endogenous social and cultural rules creating a hierarchy of 'traditional' spaces which supported public, parochial and private realms. In the contemporary period, these spaces have gone through modernisation in their governance process through introducing new actors and more formal rules, which have led to more 'publicness' and tension between tradition and modernisation. This has affected their nature as well as morphological and functional aspects.

Analysis showed that strong centralised political and public sector control is found over the governance process through a top-down representative approach. Capacities, interests and perception of public spaces among actors, in addition to poor management, strict legislation and lack of qualified cadres, have all contributed to the continuing deteriorating situation of public spaces. Moreover, interventions for improvement occurred on a short-term basis and mainly to restore historical monuments and improve traffic. An integrated approach to upgrading open spaces is still needed on a long term basis, subject to the available financial resources, with wider governance arrangements and further collaboration and integration between different governmental bodies.

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DECLARATION STATEMENT
(Research Thesis Submission Form should be placed here)

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ABBREVIATION

AKCT: Aga Khan Culture Trust

BOT: The Build-Operate- Transfer.

CORPUS: COstruction-Rehabilitation-Patrimony-USe

DG: Damascus Governorate

DGAM: Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums.

DSD: Directorate of the Service departments.

ES: Emerging Syria.

FDA: Friend of Damascus Association.

FYP: Five-Year Plan.

GCEC: General Company of Engineering and consulting.

GOs: Governmental Organizations

GTZ: German Technical Cooperation.

HCP: Historic Cities Programme.

ICG: International Crisis Group.

ISI: import substitute industrialization.

JICA: Japan International Cooperation Agency.

KFS: *King Fisal* Street.

LPC: Local Protection Committee

LPC: local protection committee.

MAM: Municipal Administration Modernization project.

MLAE: Ministry of Local Administration and Environment.

MOHC: Ministry of Housing and Construction.

NDP: Net Domestic Product.

NGO: Non-governmental organizations

NMC: Northern Mediterranean Countries.

ODD: Old Damascus Directorate.

OGG: Oxford Business Group.

POGAR: Programme of Governance in the Arab Region.

RBAS: Regional Bureau for Arab States.

RMSU: Regional Management Support Unit.

RTC: the Regional Technical Committee.

SALSA: Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act.

SD: Service Department.

SEMC: Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries.

TSD: Technical Services Directorate.

TSD: Technical Services Directorate.

UNESCO: United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

UAR: United Arab Republic.

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme .

UPD: Urban Planning Directorate.

WHO: World Health Organization.

GLOSSARY

Arabic	Translation (English)
<i>Bab</i>	city gate
<i>Bayt</i>	dwelling
<i>Bazaar- suqs</i>	complex of commercial buildings
<i>Burj</i>	tower in defensive wall
<i>Zuqaq</i>	residential access - cul-de-sac
<i>Fina</i>	domestic courtyard and exterior space adjoining house walls.
<i>Hammam</i>	public baths
<i>Hara/mahalla/akhtat</i>	quarter/district of a city/
<i>Harem</i>	Women's domestic quarters.
<i>Kasbah</i>	castle, citadel, urban fortress
<i>Khan</i>	inn, hotel (caravanserai)
<i>Madina</i>	city (or the old city)
<i>Madrasa</i>	theological school, Quranic college
<i>Maristan</i>	hospital, infirmary
<i>Shari</i>	public through street
<i>Suq</i>	marketplace
<i>Sur</i>	city wall, ramparts
<i>Tikiyya</i>	Sufi or dervish meeting place

**Changes in the nature and governance of public spaces in the
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Main Text

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

This research focuses on urban public spaces in the historic fabric of Damascus city centre. Damascus, the capital of Syria, is one of the main cities in the Eastern Mediterranean. It has played a leading role for a long time not only in Syria but also in the Arab World. The high significance of Damascus's historic core emanates not only from its extensive "urban longevity" – "Damascus started its existence in the second millennium BC" (Kostof, 1992, p.250) – but also from being one of the oldest historic cores in the world that still serves a residential purpose. Besides, it still contains many remains from different civilisations.

Damascus is situated in the south of Syria. From a geographic point of view, the urban area of Damascus is defined by three elements: *Kassioun* Mountain; *Barada* River; and *Al Ghouta* (agricultural land surrounding the city). These elements provide the connection between the outside, the site, and the defences (physical, economic, etc.) which help the city to survive (Elisseeff, 1976). Throughout history, Damascus was subject to a whole range of invaders: Hittites, Assyrians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Mongols, Mameluks, Ottomans and French until Syria got independence in 1947 and the city became the capital of the modern state.

The diversity of urban forms in Damascus has been the result of many processes: social, environmental and a series of urban development approaches – the latter having been largely promoted by the state in recent decades, as well as other interventions. We can understand to what extent these processes have influenced these urban forms by analysing the urban growth of the city.

The urban forms that existed in Damascus until 1850 are tend to be seen as 'vernacular' or organic urban forms, which have developed depending on endogenous social and environmental factors. These forms are based on courtyard buildings, which are clustered composing the urban fabric in the old town (inside the walls, i.e. "intra-muros") as well as some suburbs located towards the West, North and South areas outside the walls (i.e. "extra-muros"). These forms expanded horizontally along narrow lanes with modest

building heights (in general with two floors). The main circulation axes are occupied by the commercial functions and essential services (Bianca, 2000).

From 1850 and during the first half of the 20th century, the urban development of Damascus was influenced by the European impact in terms of social structure, typology, building types and materials. The European impact is revealed through many changes: new expansion towards the north and the west areas of the old city; cutting through of wide streets and linkage axes; tenement buildings (3-4 floors) with commercial activities on the ground floor; detached buildings such as villas; tall buildings (5 or more floors) and construction of some governmental buildings.

During the second half of the 20th century Damascus witnessed many political and socio-economic changes, accompanied by a huge urban expansion because of population growth and migration towards the city, which put a great pressure on the historic fabric. At the same time, and especially between 1930 and 1970, Damascus was subjected to a series of modernising master plans, which adopted functional planning and called for improvement in accessibility and appreciation of monumentality. These plans were prepared by foreign/local teams and supported by the state. Due conservationist objections, as well as other factors, these master plans for Damascus were only partly implemented. This was limited to demolishing parts of the historic fabric in order to create public squares and/or provide room for roads and parking areas, with a parallel focus on upgrading of individual buildings and monuments.

Legislation was passed in 1972 to prevent demolition and monitor construction inside the old city, this being updated in 1986 and 1996. Along with these regulations, in 1979 the old city (inside the wall) was enlisted in the historical heritage of United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Alghaffari, 1985, p. 94). Urban planning generally in Damascus is regulated by Law 5/1982, which still relies on the master plan paradigm, with governmental institutions being considered as the official and approved approach towards upgrading public space in the historic fabric. This is because the political model in Syria matches the state-led one described by Owen (2004), in which the state takes the leading role in promoting large programmes of economic development and social welfare.

In spite of all the legislation trying to protect the historic fabric as cultural heritage, the historic fabric was reported at risk by International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)¹ in 2001-02. The report noted the unsophisticated traffic management, incompatibility of urban form due to the insertion of high-rise alongside low-rise historical buildings, and construction of big roads and huge concrete buildings in order to modernize the cityscape. On the other hand, the report indicated that protection was applied to individual monuments, but not to their wider urban setting (i.e. the wider public realm) as an ensemble with the monument, and that this kind of protection – in addition to the lack of protection given to historic urban extra-mural neighbourhoods – frequently led to a slow but continuous destruction.

Defining the nature of high quality urban public space has been addressed in the literature and practice of urban regeneration, which has become a crucial concern for planners and architects in many so called “developed” countries (Gehl, 1987; Tibbalds, 1992; Roberts & Sykes, 2000; Llewelyn & Davies, 2004; Carmona and Tiesdell, 2007). Particular attention has been paid to the realisation that the public realm has an essential role in reviving the vitality of city life (Gehl & Gemzøe, 2000; Madanipour, 2003; Corbett, 2004).

In some cities of the Mediterranean region there have been regeneration policies and actions that have addressed the public realm and public spaces which have been documented (Bianca 2000; Marshall 2004; Busquets 2005). Moreover, an important project – RehabiMed² – highlighted the significance of Mediterranean heritage, promoted knowledge about heritage among the public and decision makers, and created a compendium of know-how and techniques used in Mediterranean heritage regeneration. Yet, despite this, very little attention has been given to the situation in Damascus.

Literature in different fields related to urban development in Syria, and specifically on Damascus, has expanded in the last few decades: on urban development of Damascus (AlFraa, 1986; Bianquis, 1994; Masanori, 1989; Qaddur, 1992); on the history of Damascus (*al-Shihabi*, 1986&1996; Sack, 1998 & 2005; *Al-Rihawi*, 1970); future studies and statistics on population growth and circulation in Damascus (JICA, 1999;

¹ ICOMOS series about heritage at risk H@R, issue titled “Damascus: a Major Eastern Mediterranean Site at Risk” reported by Stefan Weber. Source: <http://www.international.icomos.org/risk/2001/syri2001.htm>.

² RehabiMed was launched in 2004 within the ‘Euromed Heritage’ a regional programme within the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and finished in 2008.

General Company for Technical Studies and Consulting, 1999; Roujon & Vilan, 1999). Besides this, there have been many conferences, seminars and reports focusing on the importance of conservation of the old town and the Citadel in Damascus (e.g. *Alghaffari*, 1985; *Elisseeff*, 1976). While much of this literature has focused on public spaces in the historic fabric, the meaning and processes of regeneration of these public spaces in the city, however, have not been discussed in detail. The physical aspects of these spaces and their governance processes are therefore the main focus of this research.

There are two key reasons for doing this research. Firstly, the quality of public space and the nature of public realm in the historic fabric within and around the city centre are under threat, this having recently become an urgent problem in Damascus, but understanding of the problem and of how to deal with it is very limited. Most recent research and policies have emphasised the importance of conservation issues and the regeneration of the public realm has not been handled in any depth. Secondly, the public realm and urban regeneration of public space are crucial issues in urban studies, and much research and many case studies have been carried out not only in “developed” countries (e.g. UK, Germany, and Spain), but also in “developing” countries, in particular Mediterranean countries (e.g. Egypt, Tunis, and Lebanon). However, research focusing on the public realm and public spaces in historic Damascus as ‘product’ and as the result of a ‘process’ is still at a primary level. This research will be an opportunity to link the Damascus case with the growing stream of urban regeneration studies and will enrich the material available for international comparisons.

1.2 Research focus

The public realm and public spaces in the historic fabric of Damascus have been a concern to the researcher for some time. This concern about the public realm started to develop 10 years ago during the fifth year of academic study in the university. In addition, university trips to Germany in 1997 and 2001 led to a realisation of how the West gives a great appreciation to the role of the public realm and public spaces in presenting the image of the city. During subsequent work as a teaching assistant in the Faculty of Architecture after finishing undergraduate studies, and also through working as an architect for 5 years, the researcher’s particular interest was generated to investigate the situation of public spaces in

the ‘extra-muros’ areas on the edge of the old city and to explore the processes through which these spaces are managed and regenerated.

These spaces have not been transformed adequately after the incomplete implementation of the master plans. They have become open wounds in the historic fabric which are deteriorating, dominated by car movement or used as parking lots. As a result the public realm has been transformed from a social place with rich and lively public spaces into an area supporting vehicle movement and storage, but lacking in meaningful public life. These spaces highlight how difficult it is to decide what is compatible with the pre-existing environment: high buildings or low buildings? Should buildings be inward-looking as courtyard buildings are, or should they face the outside? In other words these spaces present an extreme case of the clash between modernity and tradition, between new and old. These spaces are the focus of this research.

1.3 Research Aim, Questions and Objectives

Recently, some actions have been taken to renew some of the public spaces in the ‘extra-muros’ areas on the edge of the old city. These actions followed an approach which has prioritised the restoration of historical buildings and monuments and/or improving traffic circulation. However, as noted above, such an approach has contributed to affect the public realm’s role as place for human socialising negatively. The social space diminishes and lacks human integration and engagement to become a space for movement and storage of vehicles. In addition to that is the continuous deterioration of its physical aspects. The commitment to deal in depth with regenerating the public realm and public spaces appears not to exist; there appears to be no integrated, defined system that guides the regeneration of public realm and public spaces in the ‘extra-muros’ areas on the edge of the old city. This is due to the latent deficiencies in the current planning and administrative system.

Therefore, the **overall aim** of this research is to achieve a clearer understanding of the potential for improvement of public spaces in historic city centre of Damascus. To achieve that aim, the research has five key objectives. In order to meet each objective, a key question has been formulated, which can be subdivided into a series of further sub-questions for which answers are developed in the thesis.

Key objective 1:

To develop an analytical framework for assessing public spaces and analysing the governance process of public spaces, drawing on the existing literature.

Key question 1:

What have been the main theories and approaches towards analysing public spaces as a product and as the result of a process? Is the analytical framework defined on the basis of the review of these applicable to contexts similar to Damascus?

Sub-questions:

1a) What is public space? What is public realm? What is the role of public space within the city and why is it important? What are the approaches to understand public spaces as a product, based on the literature?

1b) What is the governance process of public space? What are the concepts to analyse the governance process of public spaces?

1c) What analytical framework can be proposed to study public space as a product and as the result of a process?

1d) Does the analytical framework need to be altered for specific socio-cultural/geographic contexts such as the Mediterranean area?

Key objective 2:

To analyse the historical evolution of public space and public realm in Damascus, and to evaluate the spatial qualities in terms of urban form, movement and use/activities.

Key question 2:

How have public space and the concept of public realm evolved in historic Damascus and continue to evolve in the contemporary period?

Sub-questions:

2a) What has been the historical development of public space and public realm in Damascus? How and why did they develop this way?

2b) How have public space and the concept of public realm continued to evolve in Damascus in the post independence period?

2c) How has the meeting between old and new been resolved in contemporary Damascus in public spaces?

Key objective 3:

To explore the different actors involved and especially the role of the planning system in the process of producing the public spaces in the historic fabric in Damascus, with particular reference to the spaces on the edge of the old city.

Key question 3:

What is the process that produces the current public spaces in the historic fabric of Damascus?

Sub-questions:

- 3a) Who are the main actors involved in the governance process of the current public spaces in the historic fabric? What are their responsibilities and roles? What are their capacities?
- 3b) What are the rules of the governance process? How do the actors interact within these rules?
- 3c) What are the rationalities they use? How are the actors thinking about public space in historic Damascus? What perceptions and attitudes do they hold and how do these link to their governance?

Key objective 4:

To explore the experience in regeneration of public space in other Mediterranean cities and to draw alternative mechanisms and possible proposals which could be useful to improve the governance process of public spaces in Damascus.

Key question 4:

How are other similar Mediterranean cities' experiences relevant to Damascus and what lessons do these hold for the improvement of public spaces in historic Damascus?

Sub-questions:

- 4a) What similarities are there in public space and public realm in historic city centres across Mediterranean countries?
- 4b) What has been the experience of public space regeneration processes implemented in selected cities around the Mediterranean?
- 4c) What lessons can be drawn from these experiences in relation to the governance process of public space in historic Damascus?

A final *fifth key objective* of this research is – on the basis of the answers to the above research questions – to identify recommendations that could be made to promote and achieve changes in the governance of public space in historic Damascus with a view to improving it, and to reflect on the relevance of these elsewhere.

1.4 Research Methodology

The research as a whole takes a qualitative approach, focusing on both product and process. In terms of the final outcomes, the morphological and functional aspects of open spaces within the historic fabric of Damascus are examined using morphological analysis and direct observation. The governance process is analysed at local level to define the main actors, the rules they interact with and the rationalities they use in relation to the upgrading of the public spaces in these areas. This analysis includes locality-specific literature reviews, and interviews with key informants.

A detailed description of the methodology is given in chapter 3. This section provides a summary of the methodology. The methods used to achieve the above objectives are:

Objective 1 was addressed through a combination of academic and professional literature review which permitted the development of an analytical framework. This framework was tested and refined in the process of meeting Objective 4, i.e. through the undertaking of a comparative analysis of selected case studies from countries which have similarities with Damascus – in terms of experience, culture, climate, urban morphology and society – using the analytical framework, as well as enables evaluating and refining the framework proposed in Chapter 2.

For objectives 2 and 3, the historic city centre of Damascus, particularly public space on the edge of the old city, was used as a case study that highlights the changes in the nature of public space and public realm and their underlying causes. The main methods for analysing Damascus were specific literature review (including archival materials) and analysis of documents such as municipal records to obtain information about the planning system in Damascus. The methods of inquiry into the process of producing the public spaces included semi-structured interviews with key informants and experts. To carry out the analysis of the selected public spaces and assessment of their physical qualities, morphological and functional analysis through the application of evaluation

criteria developed in chapter 2 were used – these being based on methods that have been used successfully by many planners to help understanding how the public spaces are used (Gehl, 1987; Whyte, 1988).

Objective 4 was addressed through the already mentioned comparative analysis of selected case studies from countries which have similarities with Damascus – i.e. in the Mediterranean area. The information was gathered through surveying academic books and selected journals and analysed following the framework proposed in chapter 2. This provides a broad view of understanding public spaces (product & process) in similar contexts to Damascus.

To address the final objective (5), the understanding gained from comparative analysis across the Mediterranean, the analysis of changes in public spaces and of the governance process of historic city centre in Damascus, together with the literature review, is integrated to discuss available routes and possibilities for Damascus to upgrade public spaces.

A summary of how the above research methods contributed to meeting the research objectives is provided in Table 1.1. Key objective 5 is not included in this table, as it is met through reflection on the results from objectives 1-4.

Overall research aim	Key objectives	Key questions	Sub-questions	Methods	Location
Overall research aim	1. To develop analytical framework to analyze public space product & process.	1. What have been the main theories and approaches towards analysing public spaces as a product and as the result of a process? Is the analytical framework defined on the basis of the review of these applicable to contexts similar to Damascus?	1a. What is public space? What is public realm? What is the role of public space within the city and why is it important? What are the approaches to understand public spaces as a product, based on the literature?	- Literature review. - Analysis.	Chapter 2 & 4
			1b. What is the governance process of public space? What are the concepts to analyse the governance process of public spaces?		
			1c. What is the analytical framework to study public space as a product and as the result of a process?		
			1d. Does the analytical framework need to be altered for specific socio-cultural/geographic contexts such as the Mediterranean area?		
	2. To analyse the historical evolution of public space and public realm in Damascus, and to evaluate the spatial qualities of two public spaces on the edge of the old city of Damascus, in terms of urban form, movement and use/activities.	2. How have public space and the concept of public realm evolved in historic Damascus and continue to evolve in the contemporary period?	2a. What has been the historical development of public space and public realm in Damascus? How and why did they develop this way?	- Literature review. - Archival materials.	Chapter 5
			2b. 2b) How have public space and the concept of public realm continued to evolve in Damascus in the post independence period?	- Morphological analysis.	
			2c. How has the meeting between old and new been resolved in contemporary Damascus in specific public spaces?	- Morphological analysis. - Site observation.	
	3. To explore the different actors involved and especially the role of the planning system in the process of producing the public spaces in the historic fabric in Damascus, with particular reference to the spaces on the edge of the old city.	3. What is the process that produces the current public spaces in the historic fabric of Damascus?	3a. Who are the main actors involved in the governance process of the current public spaces in the historic fabric? What are their responsibilities and roles? What are their capacities?	- Documentary analysis of Archival materials, Documents gathered from key informants and Governorate reports. - Semi-structured interviews. - Triangulation.	Chapter 6
			3b. What are the rules of the governance process? How do the actors interact within these rules?		
			3c. What are the rationalities they use? How are the actors thinking about public space in historic Damascus? What perceptions and attitudes do they hold and how do these link to their governance?		
	4. To explore the experience in regeneration of public space in other Mediterranean cities and to draw possible proposals which could be useful to improve the governance process of public spaces in Damascus.	4. How are other similar Mediterranean cities' experiences relevant to Damascus and what lessons do these hold for the improvement of public spaces in historic Damascus?	4a. What similarities are there in public space and public realm in historic city centres across Mediterranean countries?	- Literature review - Analysis of the survey of selected journals + books	Chapter 4&7
			4b. What has been the experience of public space regeneration Processes implemented in selected cities around the Mediterranean?		
			4c. What lessons can be drawn from these experiences in relation to the governance process of public space in historic Damascus?		

Table 1.1Methods of inquiry to meet the research objectives and questions.

1.5 Contributions of the research

The research aims to provide an original contribution to knowledge in several ways.

The research aspires to make a contribution to theory by developing an analytical framework for analysing public space as a product and as the result of a process, thus building connections between spatial approaches and an institutional analysis approach. The research applies this analytical framework in order to analyse the product in Damascus and in relation to the Syrian context.

The research has three important contributions to empirical knowledge on the public realm in Damascus. It analyses current developments in the public realm of Damascus with reference to social and economic contexts. The second is that the research analyses two open spaces as a 'product' relying on a framework which has been developed from the literature review. Thus it provides a framework for a morphological and functional approach to open space as a 'product'. More importantly, the research provides an investigation of the institutional arrangements for upgrading the open spaces in the historic fabric of Damascus as a process. Thus a key contribution of this research is to produce a document which draws the links between the key actors of the current management process in order to explain the relationship with public spaces in the historic fabric and to show the process of interaction between these to manage or improve these spaces, as well as an interpretation of how this interaction affects the public realm.

The research analyses case studies from the Mediterranean region, with a main focus on the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean cities (SEMC), which have regeneration experiences of the public spaces in their historic cores, generating information about these cases based on the analytical framework developed in chapter 2, and enabling the research firstly to refine the analytical framework and to locate the case of Damascus in a wider context. It therefore also contributes to advancing methodology.

1.6 Thesis structure

This thesis is divided into seven chapters, including this chapter – the introduction – which explains the circumstances which encouraged the researcher to undertake this research and the reasons behind the choice of study. It provides an introduction to the research topic and sets out the main research aim and the research questions and objectives.

Chapter Two reviews theories and approaches to analysis of the public realm and public spaces, organised around a theoretical framework based on product and process, and an analytical framework to use throughout the research is developed.

Chapter Three starts with the discussion of the research approach and methodology and methods adopted in general, followed by a description of the actual methods that have been taken in the research in the later part of this chapter.

Chapter Four starts by discussing the definition of the Mediterranean region, the context for production of public spaces in the Mediterranean cities and the issue of open spaces in their historic fabric. It analyses the regeneration process in case studies in Aleppo, Cairo, Tunis and Barcelona, drawing conclusions on these processes of relevance to the analytical framework and to the case of Damascus.

Chapter Five advances understanding of the concept of public realm and public spaces and how this has developed within the political economy context of Damascus, using specific literature review on Damascus/Syria which includes morphological and functional analysis as well as historical background on political, economic and social context. It also explains the pressures on the historic fabric in Damascus and analyses the changes in nature of the public spaces through morphological and functional analysis, with a qualitative assessment of two open spaces in the historic fabric.

Chapter Six explores and analyses the governance processes through which the historic fabric in general is managed and regenerated, leading to identifying and analysing the current approaches through which public spaces in the historic core in central Damascus are managed and improved. In addition, it reflects on the consequences of such processes for the two open spaces in Damascus analysed in Chapter 5.

Finally, Chapter Seven summarises the main findings, addresses the key research questions and makes recommendations for the improvement of public spaces and public realm in historic city centre of Damascus, focused on the governance processes around these. Finally, it identifies opportunities for further research.

Chapter 2 A review of knowledge and understanding of public realm and public space in urban areas

2.1 Introduction

The main aims of this chapter are to review and discuss the concepts of public realm and public space in urban areas; provide an overview of approaches to analysing public spaces as products as well as of the ways of analysing the process by which these are produced, controlled and managed; and propose a conceptual framework for the analysis of public spaces and the processes around these. This review of the literature therefore focuses on two main ideas: the definition and meaning of public realm and public spaces; and different approaches to analysing public realm and public spaces which have been developed by key authors as well as concepts for analysing their development process. The chapter ends with a conclusion which firstly summarise the main points that emerge from the literature and secondly help in structuring the analytical framework.

2.2 Public realm and public space

2.2.1 The meaning of public realm and public space

Strong motivations for this research are understanding the urban spaces in historic Damascus and a concern about the current state of its public spaces, based on the belief that public realm is a crucial component of the city. As Tibbalds (1992, p.2) noted, the “public realm plays an important role in achieving a successful built environment and therefore in the vitality of the city”. As a starting point to this research, however, understanding what public realm and public space are needs some consideration.

In a generic way, the term “public realm” leads to think about things that are available to the public. According to the Oxford English Reference Dictionary (1995, p.1166) the term ‘public’ means as an adjective: “concerning the people as a whole (a public holiday; the public interest), open to or shared by all the people (public baths; public library; public meeting) and done or existing openly (made his views public; a public protest)”.

Defining the concept of the public realm can be furthered in a broader and more philosophical sense. The sociologist Jurgen Habermas' concept of the 'public sphere' is the place where people talk about life: "we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens" (Habermas *et al*, 1974, p.49). His concept is based on that a portion of public sphere comes into being in every conversation grows among private individuals who assemble to form a public body.

The 'political' public realm has also interested the philosopher Hannah Arendt (1958), who argued in *The Human condition*, one of her central theoretical works, that the term 'public' comprises two distinct but interrelated dimensions. The first is the space of appearance where "everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity" (Arendt, 1998, p.50). The second is the common world "in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it" (Arendt, 1998, p.52).

Moreover, one of Arendt's key ideas on political theory was the separation of political life (the public realm) from economic and social life (the private realm). According to Arendt the public realm is the world where individuals rise above their strict personal and private realms and communicate with others. In her view, this communication aspect of the public realm helps forming political opinions when individuals confront one another in a public space; therefore they examine and modify an issue from a number of different perspectives. She argued that the discussion only happened within a public context of argumentation and can never be formed in the private realm (<http://plato.stanford.edu>; Hol, 2005).

Arendt and Habermas both identify an increasing loss of the distinction between the public and private spheres and the negative effects of this process on the public sphere. They both criticise mass society, with which they associate the decline of the public sphere. Both, however, are criticised by, among others, the feminists for their idealisation of the distinction between public and private spheres (Fraser, 1989 cited in Madanipour, 1996).

Turning to the built environment, the following meaning of public realm is found in *the Dictionary of Urbanism* (Cowan, 2005, p.312–314): “The parts of a village, town or city (whether publicly or privately owned) that are available, without charge, for everyone to see, use and enjoy, including streets, squares and parks; all land to which everyone has ready, free and legal access 24 hours a day. Also called *public domain* and *public space*. There are many alternative ways of classifying what is or is not public realm, and assessing its quality. Criteria include whether or when people are charged for being there; whether it is publicly or privately owned; whether there are restrictions on when or how it is used (whether photography is allowed or whether people are welcome who are not engaged in the space’s primary function, for example, such as in the case of shopping malls or exclusive housing developments); and whether it is privately or publicly managed. Spaces that may or may not be classified as being public, depending on the circumstances, include shopping malls, shops, public transport, cinemas, pubs, and private housing developments.”

Francis Tibbalds (1992, p.1) regards public realm as “all the parts of the urban fabric to which the public have physical and visual access. Thus, it extends from the streets, parks and squares of a town or city into the buildings which enclose and line them”. In his definition of public realm he emphasised the social aspect with the spaces: “the most important part of our towns and cities. It is where the greatest amount of human contact and interaction takes place” (Tibbalds, 1992, p.1).

Another important work to mention here is Gehl’s studies of different city squares and streets, which focused on public spaces and public life. While, for the public spaces, he analysed the actual physical conditions provided for pedestrians, for public life he surveyed pedestrian activities in these spaces. We can identify, therefore that his definition focused on public spaces and public life. He studied people and their activities within the spaces, but not necessarily their relations between people. His focus was on social activities, i.e. “all activities that depend on the presence of others in public spaces” (Gehl, 1987, p.14).

In the same vein, Carmona *et al* (2003) argued that the public has two dimensions: physical ‘space’ and social ‘activity’ dimensions. The physical public realm represents the spaces and settings – publicly or privately owned – that sustain people, life and social contact. The socio cultural public realm means events and activities happening in

these spaces. Carmona used the term ‘public realm’ to refer to the physical aspects of the spaces as well as the activities happening within the spaces. Also Lang (2005) used the terms ‘physical public realm’ and ‘public spaces’ to refer to the elements of the artificial environment around a person. Lang discussed the ambiguity of the nature of many public spaces, because although the public has relative freedom of access to them they are often under private ownership.

The above definitions, found in the *Dictionary of Urbanism* (2005) and provided by architects and urban designers, tend to conflate the concepts of ‘public realm’ and ‘public space’. Indeed, they tend to focus more on the physical aspects than on the social ones of public realm. Other authors have been more precise in their distinction between these two concepts. Some of these authors are sociologists and others are architects, urban designers and planners who have drawn on sociology applied to understanding urban spaces.

Lofland (1998, p.11) defined realms as “not geographically or physically rooted pieces of spaces. They are social, not physical territories”. She used the social dimension to define public realm as “the locus of a complex web of relationships” (p.51), arguing that there are three types of realm: private, parochial and public³. In addition, she distinguished between public and private spaces in terms of accessibility. According to Lofland, public space is available physically and visually to people generally, in strong contrast to private place, which is not accessible to all people. For Lofland, people leave their private realm to enter a world of strangers⁴ or those who know one another categorically, without sharing cultural values, history or perspective.

Madanipour’s definitions of public space and public realm (2003, p.4) emphasised Lofland’s understanding of public realm. He used ‘public space’ (and ‘public place’) to refer to “that part of the physical environment which is associated with public meanings and functions”, while ‘public sphere’ and public realm’ are related to a much broader concept, i.e. to “the entire range of places, people and activities that constitutes the

³ Private realm is the world of the household, friend and kin networks. Parochial realm is the world of neighbourhood, workplace or acquaintance networks. Public realm is the world of strangers and the “street”. It is populated not only by persons who have not met but often, as well, by persons who do not share “symbolic worlds”.

⁴ Biographical strangers are inhabitants who do not ‘know’ each other in the biographical sense. Cultural strangers are persons who have not met and do not share ‘symbolic worlds’ (Lofland, 1998, pp.8&14).

public dimension of human social life”. He described public realm as “a display of masks, and the public space the theatre stage in which the performance takes place” (Madanipour, 2003, p.135). Carr *et al.* (1992) defined public space as the stage upon which the drama of communal life unfolds.

Summarising the above, despite this contrast between realm and space, between people and place, the meaning of the two concepts often merges, requiring each other for their definition. Some authors whose definitions appear to be based more on a design point of view are less clear about the two concepts. However, sociologists, like Lofland, planners and urban designers who draw their definitions from sociology are clearer in their distinction.

From the above we can say that public realm can be found in internal (i.e. restaurant, library, museum, etc.) and external space (i.e. city squares and streets) and can be linked to public and semi-public space in terms of various types of access and also – importantly – in terms of socialising functions. Hence a public park is public space because it has visual access for all people and semi-public because there is restriction in terms of physical access (e.g. closed at night). This public park can contain Lofland’s three realms, serving individual and socialising functions: it can be empty with no realm; it can be an example of public realm; or it can contain a private realm ‘bubble’ within it, such as an area being used for a birthday party or family reunion and if these occasions contain workplace or acquaintance networks besides household networks they became parochial realm ‘bubble’ within the park.

The concept of public space emphasises the setting of the space, accessibility and the diversity of people and activities – “it appears that definitions of public space emphasize open access to either the space or the diversity of activities, most notably the social interaction, taking place in it as caused by this open access” (Madanipour, 1996, p.148). There is some overlap in terms of that diversity of activities linked to the socialising functions which are discussed under public realm. But, as it appears from the review, studying the public realm requires deeper analysis of the relations between people and how they perceive and use the spaces.

For the purposes of this research public space is understood as an outdoor place with a certain physical configuration which contains people and activities that constitute urban

social life – its realm. Public spaces within the city, which are supposed to be accessible to the public physically and visually – and their socialising functions, outdoor activities, meaning and functions – are the product which this research focuses on. Moreover, this research takes the angle based on the scope and remit of planning and urban design, therefore, focusing more on the actual physical aspects (i.e. public space), though also overlapping to some extent with the concept of public realm insofar as this is affected by planning and urban design decisions related to the use of, and activities in, such public spaces. This research does not explore the different realms and social relations between users of these spaces. After defining the concepts of public realm and public space, the following section discusses the importance of public spaces within the city.

2.2.2 The importance of public realm and public spaces

The literature suggests that public realm and spaces are important as they provide many benefits for the city: social, ecological and urban (Gehl, 1987; Tibbalds, 1992; Thompson, 2002; Carmona and Tiesdell, 2007). According to Davis (1989) the quality of life in a city can be measured through its public spaces and to what extent they are successful in providing places where people love to go and enjoy being there. A similar belief was advocated by John Ruskin when he wrote: “The measure of any great civilization is in its cities, and a measure of a city’s greatness is to be found in the quality of its public spaces, its parks and its squares” (Cited in Cowan, 2005, p.314).

Some urban design authors have emphasised socialising functions over access functions when discussing the importance of public realm and spaces to city life. Gehl (1987) was concerned about the social life between buildings including activities and interactions among people, and how it is important that public spaces in the city give opportunities for people to meet and experience others acting in various situations. He saw life between buildings as involving the full range of activities which combine to help public spaces be more lively, meaningful and attractive. For Ward Thompson (2002, p.70) open space in cities is made up of “places to celebrate cultural diversity, to engage with natural processes and to conserve memories”. According to Ward Thompson urban open space should provide a place which encourages social interaction.

Tibbalds (1992) similarly advocated that public realm⁵ is the crucial component of the built environment where extensive human contact happens. In Tibbalds' view, a lively and attractive public realm is significant for feeling comfortable and well-being. Also Ward Thompson (2002) discussed the health benefits when she argued the importance of having access to nature as a crucial component of access to open space, as the lack of “natural relief within the urban environment” will lead in the long term to many health problems, therefore to real health costs (Ward Thompson, 2002, p.65). Of course, this relief could be created by a view and not only by access.

The issue of accessibility is important as it highlights the variety of spaces and the difficulty in distinguishing to what extent they are public (Carmona *et al*, 2003). Within his definition discussed above, Carmona *et al* (2003) argued that the physical and socio cultural public realms⁶ are all the spaces which are accessible to and used by the public:

- External public space: lands that are defined as the opposite of private landholdings. They are public square, streets, parks, highways, etc. in urban areas, and in rural areas, they are lakes, forests, rivers, stretches of coastline, etc. These spaces are accessible to all and constitute the purest form of public spaces.
- Internal ‘public’ space: such as museums, libraries, town halls, public transport facilities, etc.
- External and internal quasi-‘public’ space: this category is considered a part of the public realm even though it includes privately owned spaces such as university campuses, shopping malls, restaurants, cinemas and sports grounds. The owners have control on access and behaviour in these places (Carmona *et al*, 2003).

The previous paragraph suggests that while the term “public realm” generally suggests spaces which are accessible to all people, some spaces are less accessible: “Nevertheless, if access control is practiced explicitly and widely, the public realm’s public-ness is compromised” (Carmona *et al*, 2003, p.124). There are three forms of access:

- Visual access: when people can see inside the space before entering it, so they can decide if they want to go through or not.

⁵ Tibbalds does not clearly distinguish between public realm and public space. See section 2.2.1.

⁶ Again Carmona does not clearly distinguish between public realm and public space. His use of these terms has been left unaltered in this review. See section 2.2.1.

- Symbolic access: when spaces contain symbols which encourage or discourage people to enter them, but it depends on how people will perceive these symbols, whether as threatening or welcoming.
- Physical access: when people are able to get into the space and use it (Carr *et al*, 1992).

Thus accessibility could define the nature of the space, the kind of activities happening there as well as the range of users. A public space which is supposed to be accessible may become a semi-public and controlled space, if security guards are frequently present at entry points. In this case, a homeless person may not have access to such public space. Another public space may be accessible only to those who pay to enter and use the space; this in turn will give the space a particular social-symbolic character. On the other hand, these restrictions to free access have no impact on the presence of the three types of Lofland's public realm, as these could be still found wherever accessibility is practised in different degrees.

In his discussion of the definition of public space, and within the broad frameworks of state and society, Madanipour (2003) notes that public space is often provided and managed by the state and used by society as a whole. So it is for the benefit of society. But this is a general definition which represents a wide range of possible conditions, so he provides a more accurate definition of public spaces as places outside the boundaries of individual or small-group control, mediating between private spaces and used for a variety of often overlapping functional and symbolic purposes. Urban, open public spaces therefore have usually been multipurpose spaces distinguishable from, and mediating between, the demarcated territories of households.

Project for Public Space (2000) argued that when cities and neighbourhoods have thriving public spaces, residents have a strong sense of community. The value of public space for Carr *et al*. (1992) is that it can help people satisfy significant human rights that it can be shaped to define and protect, and special cultural meanings that it can best convey.

From the above review, it is concluded that a general consensus exists among authors on the possible urban, social and ecological benefits of public realm and public spaces within the built environment, but from different points of view. Some of the above

authors highlighted its socialising functions over the access function. Having established the importance of public space and public realm for the functioning of cities, the next sections review how public space has been, and can be, analysed – including further discussion of the issues raised in this section.

2.3 Concepts for analysing and evaluating public space (product & process)

2.3.1 Product and process in urban development

Historically architects and urban designers have been concerned about the outcome of their design and not about the urban development and administrative processes through which designs are implemented. In the same way, planners have shifted from concentration on the physical form of the city to the procedures and policies of change in the environment (Dagenhart and Sawicki, 1992; cited in Carmona and Tiesdell, 2007). This leads to thinking of how can the public space be analysed and evaluated. This section addresses this question by highlighting the importance of analysing public space as both a product and the result of a process.

Urban design stands between architecture and planning, and as such many urban design authors express an awareness of the appropriateness of analysing public space as both a product as well as the result of the process which produces it. Indeed the relationship between product and process is a source of ambiguity as they are closely intertwined: "urban design is a process which deals with shaping urban space, and as such it is interested in both the process of this shaping and the spaces it helps shape" (Madanipour, 1996, p.104).

In the following section the researcher undertakes a review of theories and issues under the theoretical framework of product and process. Different approaches to analyse public space as a product are reviewed, followed by a review of models of the development process, in order to develop the conceptual framework which is the basis for the analysis of the research problem.

2.3.2 Concepts for analysing and evaluating public space as a product

Many architecture and urban design authors who are concerned about urban life in the city have realised the important value of the public realm to city life; however they deal with the public realm as a product, i.e. focusing on the physical qualities of public space. Nevertheless they differ in the approaches they follow to analyse public space as well as in defining the elements or the considerations for producing high-quality public space. This section reviews literature concerning the different approaches to analysing

public space as primarily a product and sets out the basic sets of criteria that the most prominent authors have identified in order to draw the list of criteria was then used during the research.

Carmona *et al* (2003) used different dimensions to clarify the nature of urban design: morphological, perceptual, social, visual and functional. These dimensions are proposed by the researcher to analyse public space as a product, as they give a clear idea about how different architectural and urban design authors look at public space.

The morphological dimension

This section explores the morphological dimension of public space. Carmona *et al.* (2003) explained that urban morphology is the study of the form and shape of settlements. Understanding of urban morphology helps urban designers deal with the built environment and be aware of local processes of development and change. The initial studies in this field were led by Conzen (1960), who saw that settlements could be studied through the following key elements: land uses, building structures, plot pattern and street pattern. He focused on studying the stability of these elements.

Looking at public space from the morphological dimension entails analysing it on the basis of its morphological characteristics such as the urban layout, urban form, and configuration of space. Madanipour (1996) defined urban form as the geometry of the space. According to Carmona *et al.* (2003), Krier (2003) etc, there are two types of urban space system: 'traditional' and 'modernist'. In this view, 'Traditional' urban space consists of buildings as component parts of urban blocks, where the blocks define positive, external space. 'Modernist' urban space is what is left floating around free-standing 'pavilion' buildings in landscape settings. This distinction does describe in broad terms the general approach of modernism as opposed to previous urban morphologies, though it tends to oversimplify as it ignores historical use of pavilion-type buildings as well as modern interpretation of the urban block.

Trancik (1986) explained how and why Modernist ideas of urban space design created 'lost' space which is, according to Carmona and Tiesdell (2007), a useful way of conceiving the transformation of urban space in the late part of the twentieth century. Trancik defined lost space as an unattractive urban area with no positive contribution to

the users or the surroundings. It is a gap in the urban core which disrupts the overall continuity of the city form; pedestrian links between important destinations are often broken, and walking is frequently a disjointed, disorienting experience. In Trancik's view, the causes for this are: the highway and the automobile; the Modern Movement of architecture; urban renewal and zoning; the privatisation of public space; and changing patterns of land use in urban areas (Trancik, 1986). While Carmona provided a simple relationship between the blocks and open spaces, Trancik (1986) argued that the history of city design shows that exterior urban space, if conceived as a figural volume rather than structureless void, can reverse the unworkable 'figure-ground' relationships between buildings and open spaces of the modern city.

Madanipour (1999) argued that the functionalism of modernists gave priority to cars and fast movement across urban space, a notion which undermined the close relationship between open spaces and buildings around them. The existing urban enclosures with closed vistas, such as streets and squares, were to be demolished in favour of vast open spaces which provided a setting for a free and flexible location of buildings (Le Corbusier, 1971).

One of the key elements morphologists consider in understanding settlements is the street patterns, which Carmona *et al.* defined it as "the layout of urban blocks and, between them, the public space/movement channels or 'public space network'. The blocks define the space, or the spaces define the blocks. The ground plan of most settlements can be seen as a series of overlays from different ages." (Carmona *et al.*, 2003, p.63).

Open space and urban form are two important issues to be discussed under morphological dimension. Indeed the car movement is not a morphological issue, but as Trancik pointed out that it was one reason of creating the 'lost space' and most importantly it affects the socialising activities within the space. The next section discusses the perceptual dimension.

The perceptual dimension

The perceptual dimension has developed since the early 1960s, focusing on people's perception of their urban environment, how they value, perceive, draw meaning from, and add meaning to the urban environment. When human beings move through or use the public realm they become involved in two processes: sensation and perception. While sensation relates to vision, hearing, smell and touch (the four most valuable senses in interpreting the wider environment), perception relates to the process of gathering, organizing and making sense of information about the environment collected by such sensations. While a distinction is generally made between the two processes, in practice it is not clear where sensation ends and perception begins (Carmona *et al.*, 2003; Carmona and Tiesdell, 2007).

It is worth highlighting two points within the two processes of sensation and perception. The first one is about Bacon's (1974) and Lang's (1994) argument that all senses, not only vision, play an important role and should be considered in sensation and perception of the built environment. The second is Knox and Pinch's (2000) argument that sensation could be similar among people while perception differs depending on factors such as gender, age, lifestyle, ethnicity, length of residence in an area and on the social, cultural and physical environment in which human being lives and was raised – though it is hard to know to what extent sensations are also socially modified. Here analysing mental maps and images of places become essential to studies of environment perception in urban design (Carmona *et al.*, 2003).

In this regard, Kevin Lynch's (1960) research is a key work in the field of urban imagery. Lynch's work used cognitive (mental) mapping as a main technique and was based on two analyses. A systematic field investigation of the area was made on foot by a trained observer and lengthy interviews were held with residents of Boston, Jersey City and Los Angeles to evoke their own images of their physical environment. Initially Lynch worked on legibility (i.e. how people orientated themselves and navigated within cities), but later on he discovered that the minor theme of city orientation grew into the major theme of the city's mental image which led him to the concept of 'imageability'. From his research, Lynch identified three attributes for environmental images to be 'workable': identity, structure and meaning. Moreover he identified five key physical

elements – paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks – which ‘seem astonishingly similar in some very diverse cultures and places. We were lucky’ (Lynch, 1984, p.249).

Critics of Lynch’s work pointed out that observers were related to different backgrounds and experience, thus leading to different city images, and thus questioned the validity of aggregating the environmental images of people. In addition, Lynch’s focus was on perceptual knowledge of physical form and did not take into account what urban environment meant to people and how they felt about it.

Another key idea to approach the public realm is the ‘sense of place’ which has been extensively discussed by some authors. For Relph (1976) physical setting, activities, and meaning are the three basic elements of the identity of places. Research continues on Relph's work but the emphasis has been put on activities and meaning as the sense of place relies not only on physical appearance but also on events, activities happened within the place and the meaning of them (Jackson, 1994). In other words, while space is the physical container of activities and meaning, it is our social and cultural categories that provide the meaning and hence ability to understand and define place.

The social dimension

Dealing with any place or space should consider the society living within the space. The key idea here is that people moving within and sensing the public realm not only draw meaning from this, but add meaning to the urban environment. People thus modify spaces and create places while at the same time being influenced by them in different ways (Carmona et al, 2003). The following paragraphs focus on some of the key aspects of the social dimension in the relationship between people and space, the interrelated concepts of public realm and public life and accessibility.

Most of the literature which is about the role of streets as spaces for social contacts originated in the United States, was rooted back to the sociology of the 1920s and 30s, primarily to the Chicago School, and was published during the last 40 years. Jacobs (1961), Gehl (1971) and Banerjee (2001) are some of the authors who were particularly interested in the relationship between space and social /urban experience.

The early critique of functional zoning and Modernist urban space design was provided by Jane Jacobs (1961). Jacobs' analysis was based on her personal observation of the neighbourhoods in which she lived. She was concerned about the urban life of cities. For Jacobs, understanding cities requires dealing with a mixture of uses as her emphasis is on the vitality of the city which depended on overlapping of activities. She described four physical conditions for dynamic urban life. These are: multifunctional, neighbourhoods, short blocks and connected street systems, varied age residential areas and a high concentration of people:

“In short, I shall be writing about how cities work in real life. Because this is the only way to learn what principles of planning and what practices in rebuilding can promote social and economic vitality in cities, and what practices and principles will deaden these attributes” (Jacobs, 1961 cited in Larice and Macdonald, 2007, p.).

The first two of these conditions are about functional and morphological aspects of the spaces and the other two are about people who use the spaces. Jacob's point is that these conditions create the opportunity for bringing people together, thus creating more public spaces.

Jan Gehl analysed the relationship between the quality of outdoor spaces and the rate of occurrence of outdoor activities. In his book *Life between buildings* (1987 and 1996), he discussed that the quality of space is related to the activities happening there. He explained that to design conditions for, and patterns of, activities through the design process is as important as to decide the materials and colours for a “palette in a city” (Gehl, 1987, p.33).

To understand more this concept, we need to investigate how Gehl described outdoor activities. He classified these in three groups:

- Necessary activities: such as going to school or work, shopping, waiting for a bus. People have little choice but to do these activities. They will be done almost in all conditions and they are fairly independent of the exterior environment.
- Optional activities: such as taking a walk, standing around enjoying life or sitting. People will engage in these activities when weather and place invite them, and can be quite individual. The relationship with the exterior physical conditions is very important in this group of activities.

- Social activities: such as children at play, conversations and greetings, communal activities and passive contacts like seeing and hearing other people. These activities depend on people's presence in public spaces and develop according to the two previous activity groups "social activities are indirectly supported whenever necessary and optional activities are given better conditions in public spaces" (Gehl, 1987, p.14).

Through observation and analysis of spaces in Copenhagen between 1968 and 1986, he found that quality improvement depended on trying to find more spaces for "a broader spectrum of human activities", thus making spaces more conducive to public social life (Gehl, 1987, p.34). Moreover it was found that improvement of the physical conditions of public areas has been accompanied with increase in the number of pedestrians; lengthening of the time spent outdoors; and a wider range of outdoors activities. In other words, when "a better physical framework is created, outdoor activities tend to grow in number, duration and scope" (Gehl, 1987, p.39). But this ignores other circumstances which could exist – e.g. political and economic circumstances (e.g. if there was violence or extreme poverty in the society this would not necessarily be true). As such Gehl's findings are conditional and not causal.

The visual dimension

Generally the visual perspective on development has been established alongside movements such as 'City Beautiful' in the US and 'Townscape' in the UK. Moreover the visual dimension of urban design remained the dominant one until at least the 1960s (Carmona et al, 2003; Carmona and Tiesdell, 2007). Mainly for the purpose of this research two ideas will be discussed in the following paragraphs. The first is the aesthetic qualities of urban spaces and townscape. The second concerns the design of elements that define urban space.

While a number of authors have significantly contributed to contemporary townscape theory (e.g. Sitte, 1889; Gibberd, 1953; Worskett, 1969; Tugnutt and Robertson, 1987), the modern 'townscape' approach has always been closely associated with Gordon Cullen (1914-1994), who was an English architect and founder of the Townscape movement. He was a key motivator and activist in the development of British theories of urban design in the post-war period.

Cullen described the visual perspective of townscape through developing the concept of 'serial vision' which appeared in book form as *Townscape* (1961), later republished as *The Concise Townscape* (1971). Cullen argued that the urban environment is not typically experienced as a static composition; it is experienced in some form of dynamic, emerging, unfolding and temporal sequence. For Cullen the urban environment should be considered and designed from the point of view of the moving person.

With the development of new modes of travel, new doors opened up for different ways of researching how urban environment could be seen at different speeds and with different levels of engagement and focus (Carmona *et al*, 2003). While Cullen's (1961) and Bacon's (1974) work observed a pictorial sequence of how a pedestrian's visual experience can be read, Appleyard *et al.* (1964) explored the motorist's visual experience in the book *The view from the road* and Robert Venturi *et al.* (1972) explained how the environment was designed to suit car-based observers.

The last idea in this section considers the main elements for enhancing the visual-aesthetic character of urban space: its architecture and its landscaping. Carmona *et al.* (2003) have provided a set of criteria for structuring the architecture of urban space which could be summarized by: order and unity, expression, integrity, plan and section, detail and integration. On the other hand the design of hard and soft landscaping should be considered in parallel with the whole design process as a well- designed landscape helps improve quality and add visual interest and colour (Carmona *et al*, 2003).

An important point in order to highlight the difference between visualisation and aesthetics is the social categorisation of visual and other sensations. There are a variety of aesthetic values to assess public spaces with those of professional urban designers normally predominating in urban design practice critique and analysis, which tends to ignore other sets of value which may be used by non-designers and which should be taken on board upon assessing the aesthetic of urban space. As a conclusion, the researcher agrees with Carmona and Tiesdell (2007) that the visual dimension is very important but it is not enough to create a successful public space as this links to perception and the set of values being used in assessing the aesthetic of urban space. It should be part of a whole and it should be considered alongside other dimensions.

The functional dimension

Analysing the public realm from a functional perspective involves understanding how spaces work. Carmona *et al.* (2003) argued that ‘social’ and ‘visual’ traditions of urban design thought each had a ‘functionalist’ perspective. Most well-known authors in the field of the use of public space are Jacobs (1961), Gehl (1971), Whyte (1980), Carr *et al.* (1992), Hillier (1996) and the Project for Public Spaces (2000).

The work of William Whyte on urban plazas in New York City took place during the 1970’s, with particular interest in how people use public spaces, to understand why some plazas are successful while others are not and to suggest guidelines for designing successful plazas. Whyte’s main method was observation by counting people using video camera and a time-lapse film as a primary observation tactic in 18 plazas. The key finding from his work was that high level of use in a plaza is influenced by the existence of several variables from within the built environment (sittable space, proximity to street life, sunlight, water/fountains, trees and the availability of food from street vendors or cafes). Also, his research enabled him to predict the role of certain key variables in the built environment to encourage high level of plaza use.

While Whyte’s analysis was based on observation, Carr *et al.*’s (1992) argument was based on synthesising research on the use of public spaces. They argued that public space should be responsive, democratic and meaningful, and that community involvement is the key to achieve such spaces (Carr *et al.*, 1992).

Carmona *et al.* (2003) explained that the public space network has two functions: it provides access to private properties and contains two overlapping realms of social and movement space. Movement space is dedicated to pedestrian and vehicular movements. When the modes of transport were limited to feet or horse, there was a considerable possibility for the two realms of social and movement to overlap as the pedestrian movement is compatible with the social space. But with the development of motorised modes of travel, the opportunity for the two realms to overlap has become less, and similarly with colonising of public space by the car, which is pure circulation, the potential social aspects of the space diminished in favour of circulation.

But why did the potential social aspects diminish in favour of circulation? Madanipour (2003) provides an interesting answer, arguing that the car is an extension of personal space that can take a physical shape. As we sit inside a box moving across the urban space, we carry around with us a personal space. The inside of this box is visible to others, but it is not often accessible to them. The car is the private domain of its passengers. The public road is then sometimes carpeted by private boxes. The prevalence of cars in the city has historically reduced pedestrian safety and comfort.

Furthermore, Madanipour (2003) argued that the personal space of the pedestrian used to be a small space around the body, which was now enlarged to the moving glass and metal box of the car. The possibility of communication and sharing of personal space, as it can happen in a face-to-face meeting, is thus reduced as communication from across these boxes can mainly be visual.

Finding a balance between accommodating traffic and sustaining the quality of life has been a concern for many authors (Buchanan, 1988 a&b; Appleyard and Lintell, 1972, Appleyard, 1981; Hass-Klau, 1990; Jacobs, 1993; Hass-Klau *et al.*, 1999). Buchanan (1964) addressed the conflict between accommodating vehicular traffic and preserving urban fabric when he proposed an 'environmental' area based on the mixed-use block concept bounded by main roads, with internal streets being accessible only to local traffic. For Carmona *et al.* (2003) the main roads act as barriers to movement across them and cause fragmentation of urban areas. Appleyard and Lintell (1972) produced a well known research in which they compared three streets in San Francisco that shared similar characteristics but varied in social use and in the amount of traffic. They noticed that an active social life existed in the lightly trafficked street.

Some may argue that the converse is not causally true – a busy traffic street can be highly social in nature. However, this street is full of movable private realms and, as Madanipour (2003) argued, the communication across these boxes can mainly be visual. The barriers between individuals in the public space of the city are therefore not the observation of an invisible space around them. The barrier is now both the speed with which they pass through the city and the physical container which they inhabit in their passage. Driving a car is 'a way to feel social without having to be social' (Kuipers, 2002 cited in Madanipour 2003).

For Carmona *et al.* (2003) designing successful public spaces entails understanding movement, especially pedestrian's movement, and they should therefore be integrated within local movement systems: "Movement through public space is at the heart of the urban experience, an important factor in generating life and activity" (Carmona *et al.*, 2003, p.169). This re-emphasises circulation and movement, which is the basis of Hillier's work.

Hillier's empirical research at University College London's Space Syntax Laboratory (Hillier and Hanson, 1984 and Hillier 1996a) is important to be considered here despite his work coming under urban morphology, as it concerns how people use space. Hillier's main idea is based on the observation that movement density can be predicted from analysis of the structure of the urban grid. Hillier's analysis is based on key geometric properties of the spatial configuration (i.e. network/grid of spaces) of urban areas. These are conceptualised as a series of 'convex' spaces linked by straight 'axial' lines. From the network of axial lines, each line's 'integration value' (its position with respect to the system as a whole) can be calculated. The integration value is regarded as a good predictor of natural movement: the more integrated the line, the more movement along it; the less integrated, the less that route is used.

Hillier's work has two areas of difficulties. The first area is that the issue of accessibility is also important, with restriction on car access potentially resulting in increased pedestrian density. Hillier's theory does not consider the design of the space as involving more than spatial configuration. The second is that in his work movement is key, but the analysis ignores the purpose of this movement. However, Space Syntax has been widely accepted as a tool for analysing space use. The key point is that well-connected spaces will support pedestrian movement and encourage a viable and vital range of uses.

Functions of public space are not only socio-cultural and movement. Public space offers opportunities for economic activity (e.g. ice cream/coffee stands) and political possibilities (e.g. displays/protests). Carr *et al.* (1992, p.12) argued that public spaces could encourage the opportunity for new commercial development to take place. When spaces are designed for enjoyment and relaxation, with supports for informal performances and other interesting activity, these can attract people who may then become good customers for retail business. Project for Public Space (2000) noted that

public spaces offer free, open forums for people to encounter art and to participate in other cultural activities, all of which can add to the rich functional mix.

This section has discussed analysing public spaces from the functional viewpoint, which is a part of a design process in which the urban designers try to make better spaces. However, Carr *et al.* (1992, p.18) argued that when designs are not grounded in social understanding, they may fall back on the relative certainties of geometry, in preference to the apparent vagaries of use and meaning. It is thus recommended that urban designers should be aware not to prioritise the functional dimension among others; they should be able to combine functionality with social objectives.

Reflection

Section 2.2 started with a review of the literature on the definition public space and public realm. It was noted that these two concepts are often conflated in the literature, and sometimes both need to be looked at to gain a holistic understanding about city life and how it functions. While public space is concerned more with the physical condition of the space, public realm is about people and life happening within the space.

In this section, after reviewing different approaches taken by the urban design and architecture authors, we can conclude that public space can be analysed following different approaches:

- Morphological dimension concerned with urban blocks, layout and circulation issues;
- Perceptual dimension concerned with how people understand and perceive the space;
- Social dimension concerned with the public life in the city (public realm);
- Visual dimension concerned with the aesthetic qualities of public spaces;
- Functional dimension concerned with how spaces work and respond to people's needs.

All these dimensions can be used to analyse spaces in Damascus, as the investigation within each dimension reveals different issues. However, this research has focused on the morphological and functional dimensions to analyse public spaces. This selection is made for three reasons. The first is that, as Carmona *et al.* (2003) argued, the

appreciation of morphology helps urban designers to be aware of local patterns of development and process of change. Secondly, analysing the public spaces from a functional perspective involves how spaces work and how urban designers can make better spaces. These two reasons are linked to the researcher's initial action-orientated motivation to find ways to improve open space in Damascus, and morphology and function appear to be the two dimensions over which built environment professionals can potentially exert a higher influence. Thirdly, the research methodology (see Chapter 3) includes a historical review of the development of open space in Damascus – existing sources offer much more material allowing the analysis of morphological and functional aspects than of any of the other dimensions. However, this research does take into account the socialising activities happening with public spaces, without dealing deeply with the concept of public realm as presented by Lofland (1998) in section 2.2.1 above.

Three main key categories - and related sub-categories - have been identified within these two dimensions:

- Urban form, which consists of the sub-categories of built form and open space and the relation between them, is important when public space is analysed within urban morphology.
- Movement is a function of space which is greatly influenced by urban morphology, which consists of pedestrian and vehicular movement (sub-categories).
- Use and activities are crucial to understand public space and how they work within the city from functional point of view, which consists of the following sub-categories: land use on perimeter of open space, use within open space and activities.

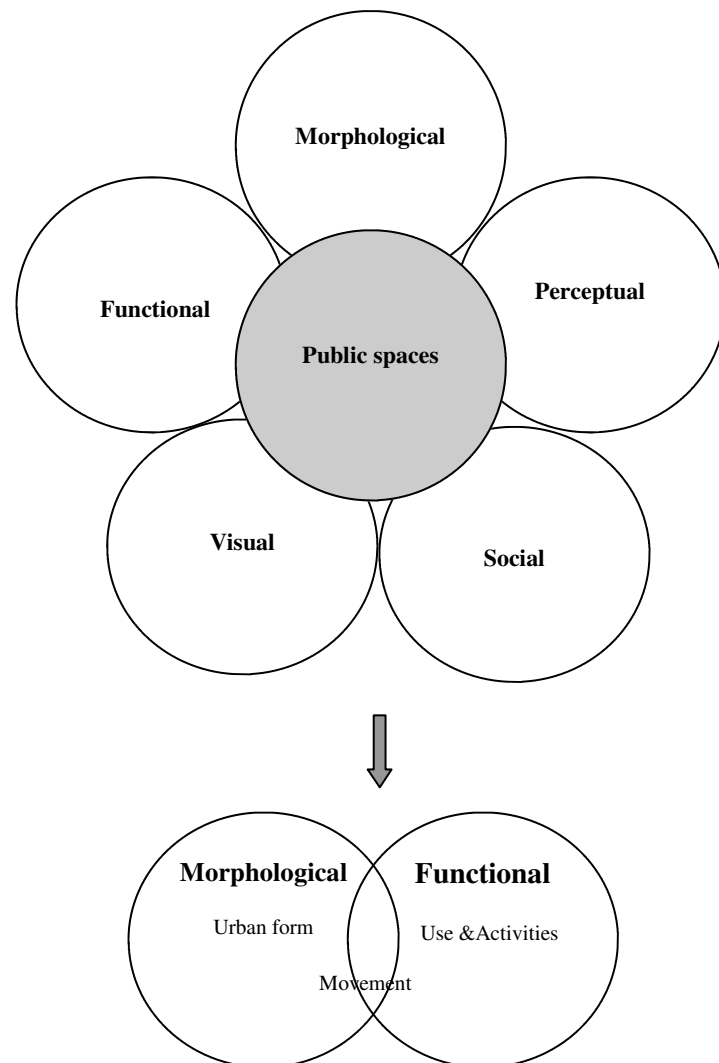


Figure 2.1 The different dimensions of analysing public spaces as a product with the two proposed dimensions used in this research.

So what makes successful public space?

Some authors focus more on activities and see the successfulness of public space in the extent to which it encourages animation and vitality. For Jacobs (1961) four conditions could bring people onto the street: multifunctional neighbourhoods, short blocks and connected street systems, varied age residential areas and a high concentration of people. For Montgomery (1998, p.99) successful public realm is one which provides a 'transaction base' and which is 'as complex as possible'. This transaction must include cultural and social as well as economic activity.

Also the Project for Public Spaces (2000) identified four key attributes which provide a framework for evaluating how a space is ‘performing’ and understanding how spaces work:

- Comfort and image concerned with perceptions about safety and cleanliness, the scale of adjacent buildings, and a place’s character or charm;
- access and linkage: a successful public space is easy to get to and visible;
- Uses and activity are the reasons people come the first time and why they return: when a place is empty and unused this means that something is wrong;
- and sociability means that people see friends, meet and greet their neighbours, and feel comfortable interacting with strangers, so that they tend to feel a stronger sense of place or attachment to their community. This makes sociability a difficult to measure but unmistakable quality for a place to achieve.

In addition, Project for Public Spaces (2000) identified the characteristics of a successful space. These are a high proportion of people in groups; higher than average proportion of women; different ages and varied activities.

Marcus and Francis’s (1998) approach towards the analysis of public spaces is useful, because it provides a number of design guidelines for public open spaces that work for people. They spent years observing how people use public spaces and asking people how they feel about the spaces they use. In their book *People Places: design guidelines for urban open space* they provided the important spatial characteristics of different types of urban plazas. However, they emphasized that each city might develop its own local guidelines for specific plaza types.

For Carr *et al.* (1992) they considered the community needs and developed their perspective on three primary values. They argued that public space should be ‘meaningful’ (i.e. help people connect between the place, their personal lives, and the world), ‘democratic’ (i.e. protecting the rights of user groups, being accessible to all groups and providing for freedom of action), as well as ‘responsive’ (i.e. designed and managed to serve the needs of their users). In this respect they identify five crucial needs that people

seek to satisfy in public space: ‘comfort’, ‘relaxation’, ‘passive engagement with the environment’, ‘active engagement with the environment’, and ‘discovery’.

While Carr *et al.* 's (1992) focus on the community to set the considerations is important for successful public spaces, Carmona and Punter (1997) argued, based on social perspectives on urban design, that public realm policies give the importance to individual aspects of the public realm, while the broader consideration of the network of public spaces, the permeability of blocks and neighbourhoods and the whole question of the quality of the public realm remains undeveloped. Therefore, authorities in the UK gave special attention to the public realm – its nature, structure and quality – focusing on a set of design considerations including: mixed use, density, building and street relationships, traffic calming and traffic exclusion and the provision of soft and hard landscaping.

For Gehl (1987), people leave their mode of travel to enter public spaces experiencing the surroundings at a slow walking speed and at eye level. Movement in good public spaces will primarily be dominated by walking, cycling and limited vehicular traffic. With regard to pedestrian movement, how the traffic will be distributed depends on the quality of public spaces. A public space of high quality will always be recognized by people opting to interrupt their walk or daily activities in order to rest, enjoy the city, the public spaces and be together with other people. The optional and social activities are the important keys to space quality. In poor quality public space, one will only find necessary activities i.e. people doing things they have to do.

Celik *et al.* (1994, p.6) studied streets in some parts of the world, noting that they are no longer viable culturally and socially “with both the abandonment of the public realm and the creation of a pseudo public realm, civic values, such as the street as a space for community have disappeared”. For Celik the intervention in one of the famous streets in Istanbul reflects the ‘Oriental’ mentality in the intervention in using forms as summaries to represent cultures and societies. For Celik, this mentality considers society without history, characterising it by its ‘traditions’, which are considered to remain constant throughout time. Deemed incapable of change and dynamism, non-western society has thus been ‘fixed’ in history.

This last paragraph highlights the importance of understanding the society when it comes to evaluating the successfulness of public spaces within a particular context. Public spaces often come to symbolise the community and the larger society or culture in which they exist. Each culture has its own public-private profile, which emerges from a complex set of actors, the interaction of physical, social, political and economic realities (Carr *et al.*, 1992). However, Celik's comment does not provide clear criteria for evaluation of the street as public space and public realm.

Based on the review of literature of urban designers' considerations for successful public spaces, Table 2.1 summarises the main indicators and considerations which have been identified as important to the quality of the public space and public realm from a morphological and functional perspective. The sub-categories defined previously (see p.35) are broken down to provide the main indicators which will be used in the analysis of public spaces in chapter 5. Figure 2.2 provides the three main categories along with their sub-categories and indicators. Built form is analysed looking at building age, size and height of the buildings. Open space is analysed looking at the layout and shape of the space, its scale and its location within the city. In order to discuss pedestrian and vehicular movement, the analysis looks at access, permeability and the movement surface are and connectivity. Land use on perimeter of open space is discussed in terms of ground floor use, ground floor facades and potential service area. For the use within the open space, this includes parking, vending, planting, landscape of space, art, sitting and playing areas and pavement cafes. In terms of activities, necessary, optional and social activities are discussed.

Table 2.2 summarises the main indicators from fig 2.2 along with their evaluation criteria drawn from the literature. These evaluation criteria are drawn from a variety of sources, all of which have been discussed earlier in this chapter at a more general level. In this table more specific points made by the reviewed authors, relevant to each indicator, are collected as a means to evaluate specific spaces - as is done later in chapter 5.

Table 2.1 Lists of indicators and considerations that are important to the quality of public realm and space from morphological and functional viewpoints.

Carr et al (1992)	Bill Hillier (1996)	Carmona & Punter (1997)	Marcus and Francis (1998)	Project for public spaces (2000)
Comfort	Pedestrian movement	Mixed use.	Location	Comfort and image
Relaxation	Integration	Crime and safety.	Size	Access and linkage
Passive engagement with the environment	Permeability	Accessibility.	Visual complexity	Uses and activity
Active engagement with the environment	Configuration of space	Public art.	Potential service area	sociability
Discovery		Layout.	Microclimate (sunlight, temperature, glare wind, overall comfort).	
		Highway layout.	Boundaries and transition.	
		Parking.	Circulation	
		Sustainable layout.	Seating (materials, amount and orientation).	
		Public and private public realm.	Planting	
		Permeability.	Level change	
		Space network.	Public art	
			Paving	
			Programs	
			Vending	
			Information and signs	
			Maintenance and amenities.	

Table 2.1. Continued

Jane Jacobs (1960)	William Whyte (1980,1988)	Roger Trancik (1986)	Gehl (1987)	Tibbalds (1992)
Mix use	Buildings flush to the side walk. Stores along the frontages Doors and windows on the street	Diversity of building styles and forms. Scale and character for making coherent.	Protection against traffic & accident. Protection against crime & violence.	Attractive pedestrian street frontages. Scale.
Space for Pedestrian movement	Good pavement Seating and simple amenities.	Visible connections between old and new uses, buildings and activities.	Protection against unpleasant climatic extremes.	Height of buildings. Public art
Small Parks & squares	Trees Sunlight, warmth and lack of wind.	Spaces for social discourse taking precedence over the movement and storage of automobiles.	Possibilities for walking Possibilities for standing Possibilities for sitting. Possibilities to see.	Movement Pedestrian movement Vehicle movement. Layout Mixed use
Diversity in size of blocks			Possibilities for hearing/talking.	Density Safety
Efficient Transportation			Possibilities for play/unfolding/activities	Character and quality of local environment
Safety.			Scale Possibilities for enjoying positive aspects of climate. Aesthetic quality/positive sense-experiences.	Materials

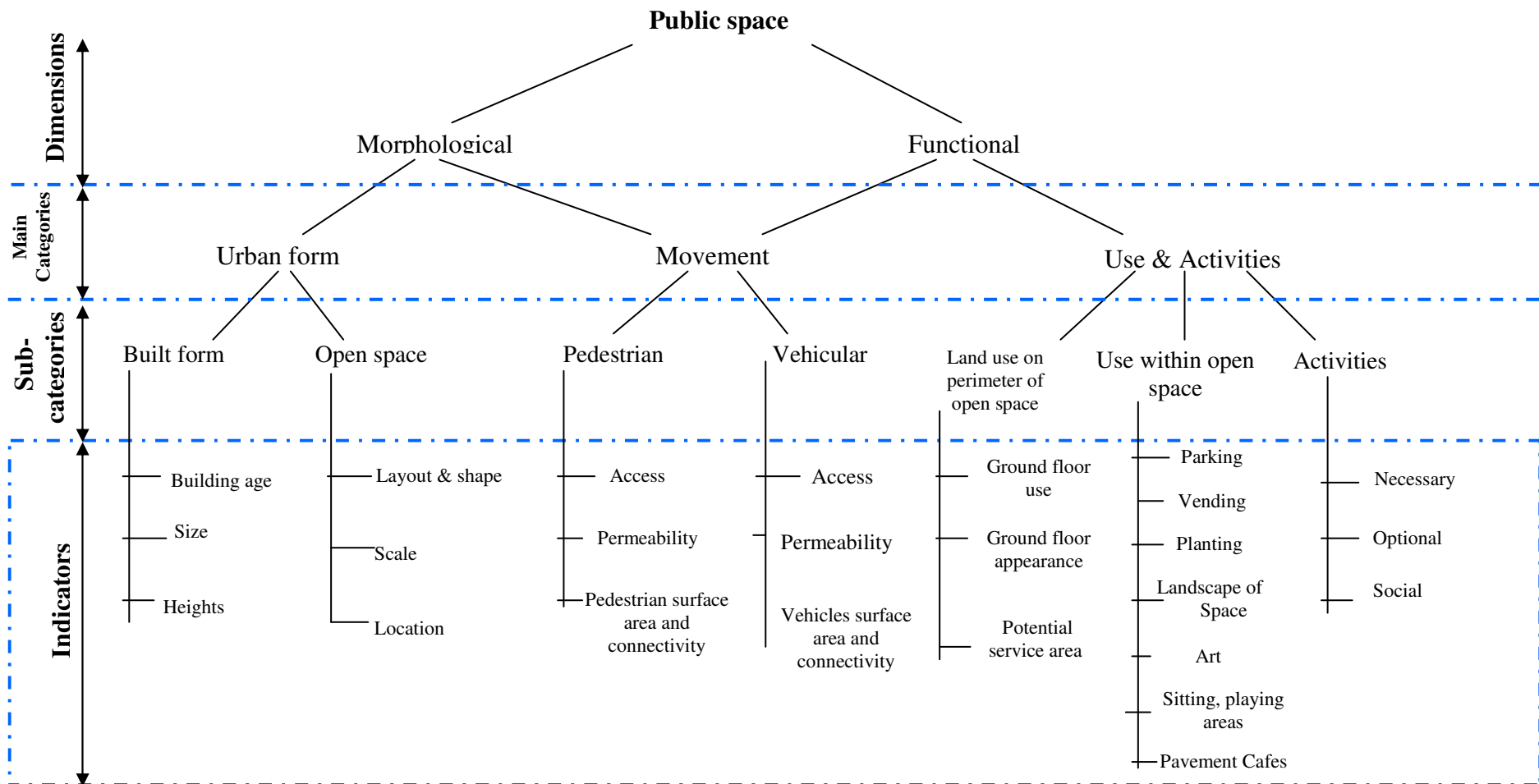


Figure 2.2 The main categories defining public space along with their sub-categories and main indicators for evaluation.

Table 2.2 Main indicators for successful public space along with their evaluation criteria drawn from the urban design literature.

Sub-categories	Indicators	Criteria for evaluation
Built form	Building age	This looks at the origin of the buildings surrounding the space, including surviving elements of historic monuments (Liewelyn & Davies, 2004).
	Size	It is difficult to make recommendations regarding size, as every location and context is different; however, Gehl proposed a maximum dimension of 70 to 100 metres in open space, as this is the maximum distance for being able to see events (Gehl, 1987). Liewelyn & Davies (2004) suggest that the distance is between 18-100m in open space sub-section.
	Height	Appropriate heights to the surrounding buildings. Avoiding Overshadowing and overlooking.
Open space	Layout & shape	Prioritise the design of spatial form, establishing the pattern of public spaces, and then the pedestrian interlinkages and finally the needs of the car and roads (Carmona & Punter, 1997). The best check of open space's shape is to prepare a figure-ground drawing, with buildings as figure and outdoor space as ground (Liewelyn & Davies, 2004).
	Scale	In historic contexts the human scale will be guaranteed by a respect for both the existing morphology and grain and the prevalent building forms (Carmona & Punter, 1997).
	Location	Strong connections to and from the space (Gehl & Gemzøe, 2001).
Pedestrian	Access	A good public space is one that is accessible to all people and therefore the mobility needs of children, women with children, elderly and disabled people are considered (Carmona & Punter, 1997).
	Permeability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice of movement. • Ensure safe use of the public realm – an area divided into small blocks gives the user greater choice of routes and therefore greater flexibility of movement than one divided into large blocks. • Street junctions at 70 to 100 metres provide a high degree of permeability (CABE, 2000).
	Pedestrian surface area and connectivity	This looks at amount of areas designed for pedestrian use and how these are joined up and should allow the easiest route (Gehl, 1987).

Table 2.2. Continued.

Vehicular	Access	The farther away from the space the cars are parked, the more will happen in the space, because slow traffic means lively space (Gehl, 1987).
	Permeability	This looks at car routs and how they are connected as an indicator of permeability given to car movement. The ease of traffic flow through the space and the availability of traffic calming signs.
	Vehicle surface area and connectivity	This looks at amount of areas designed for vehicle use and how these are joined up.
Land use on perimeter of open space	Ground floor use	Activity-generating uses at the ground-floor level (Carmona & Punter , 1997).
	Ground floor Facades	Good ground floor facades are rich in detail and exciting to walk by. Small units, transparent frontages and high quality of materials. Banks, offices, and shops with long, uninteresting facades create lifeless and boring space. Blank walls underlie the futility of visiting the city outside working hours (Gehl, 1987; Gehl & Gemzøe, 2001).
	Potential service area	General use of the space should be considered, followed by an investigation of who the actual users of a specific space might be. This should include knowing where the potential users will come from and how far they will travel to use a plaza (Marcus & Francis, 1998).
Use within open space	Parking	This includes the places designed for cars to park within the space. It should be visible for security. Parking areas could be shared with pedestrian use at residential areas. Pedestrian routes should be clearly defined within parking areas. Vehicles should not be allowed to dominate the space (Liewelyn& Davies, 2004).
	Vending	This looks at the vending locations within the space and how successful they are in being an activity node and not to inconvenience pedestrians.
	Planting	For planting to be successful, it should be appropriately designed to provide enjoyment, shadowing, edges for the space. It should provide visual interests for people sitting there or passing through. The eventual height and mass of planting should not cut off the view of an activity or performance area for some plaza users.
	Landscape of space	This includes edges of the space and level change. Edge effect can be felt where popular zones for staying are found along the facades in a space or in the transitional zone between one space and the next, where it is possible to view both spaces at the same time (Gehl, 1987). For most observers, a public space that includes some modest but observable changes in level is preferable aesthetically to one that is absolutely flat. A very large space can be subdivided into more human –scale ‘outdoor rooms’ by the different levels (Marcus & Francis, 1998).

Table 2.2. Continued.

Use within open space	Art	It is useful to stress the contribution that art can make to the identification and quality of public space, both as an integral part of the space itself (for example a landmark or sculpture) and as part of the buildings the surround the space. It is important to emphasise that art is often more effectively integrated as functional elements of the building or space, or as foci for spaces or views.
	Sitting & playing areas	These considered nodes of activity, complemented by quiet zones for rest and people-watching. They should enable people to have views across the space. Spaces within housing areas should contain play areas for children and facilities for sitting.
	Pavement Cafes	
Activities	Necessary	The things that have to be done: Going to school, waiting for the bus and going to work. In the short term these types of activities occur regardless of the quality of the physical environment because people are compelled to carry them out (Gehl, 1987).
	Optional	Activities people are tempted to do when climatic conditions, surroundings and the space are generally inviting and attractive. These activities are especially sensitive to quality. They only occur when quality is high (Gehl, 1987).
	Social	These activities occur whenever people move about in the same spaces. Watching, listening, and experiencing other people, passive and active participation (Gehl, 1987).

2.3.3 Concepts for analysing the process of public space production

The importance of analysing the process

Before undertaking this research, the researcher was fascinated with the physical appearance of public spaces and strongly motivated to understand why these, especially on the edge of the old city of Damascus, look the way they do now, hence the focus was on the product with no awareness of the underlying forces which create this public space.

Without such awareness, designers' work may remain on paper with no understanding of the context in which they operate, and of the mechanisms which would implement their design proposals (Krier, 1993; Madanipour, 1996). For Madanipour the designers' awareness of the development process provides them with an initial stage from which to communicate with other parties engaged in the process. Without such awareness, designers will only be involved in the creation of a form without being consciously related to its complex contents and process.

The starting point to advance this awareness, as Knox and Ozolins (2000) noted, is to realise that the kind, time and place of the structures which get built are not in the hands of architects and urban designers but of others, such as developers and politicians. Therefore it is very important to consider the design and production of the built environment as a process that involves a variety of actors or decision-makers, each with rather different goals and motivations. As they interact with one another over specific development issues they constitute an organisational framework for the evolution of the built environment.

Review of models of the development process

Many urban design authors (Healey 1991, 1992; Madanipour, 1996; Carmona *et al.*, 2003; Carmona and Tiesdell, 2007) have discussed models of the development process. Carmona *et al.* (2003) identified five models to facilitate understanding the development process:

- Equilibrium models: related to economics which are based on the premise that development activity is directed by economic signals.
- Event–sequence models: related to estate management, mainly focusing on the management of stages in the development process.
- Agency models: related to institutional explanation, which focuses on the actors and their relationships.
- Structure models: related to political economy, concerned with the wider market, labour, land aspects and their relationships.
- Institutional models: which describe agencies and events and their relationships to broader structural forces (and hence the preceding three aspects).

The authors argued that though these models could be useful as introduction to the development process they failed to explain why urban development takes the form it does and also to highlight other aspects, such as the differential power of the various actors and institutions. According to Healey (1992), the first four models are derived from two traditions of conceptualisation: neoclassical and Marxist economics. The first three models in the neoclassical tradition emphasised the need to address both the processes which organise the relations of economic activity within the development process and the complexity of the event-sequences, agency interests, strategies and relations involved. These models deal with actors and institutions working within a market organised on the basis of supply and demand, and they focus on economic process, on event-sequences and on agency behaviour. Structure models on the other hand derive from Marxist analysis of the urban political economy emphasising the concept of struggles between groups for control of the surplus generated in production instead of the notion of the individual rational actor operating in a market context.

Moreover, Healey argued that in spite of each of these four models having the potential to contribute to the objective they set out, none of them can fully address the range of possible dynamics and forms which the development process may include. While the models of neoclassical tradition tell little about how the relations of economic activity are constituted, the models of Marxist economic analysis offer little help in providing a descriptive terminology for examining instances of the development process in detail.

Therefore, drawing on institutionalist approaches in other fields of social science, Healey developed an alternative model which is a descriptive institutional model of the

development process that considers the variety of agencies, agency relations, activities and events involved in development projects. The model proposed by Healey proceeds through four levels:

- “A description of events which constitute the process and the agencies which undertake them.
 - Identification of the roles played in the process and the power relations between them.
 - An assessment of the strategies and interests which shape these roles and the way these are shaped by resources, rules and ideas.
 - The relations between these resources, rules and ideas and the wider society”.
- (Healey, 1992, p.33).

For Madanipour (1996), the above models of the development process could come under two sets of analysis. The first focuses on actors and institutions under which equilibrium models, event-sequence models and agency models could be grouped. The second set relies on political economy understanding of the development process under which capital – labour and structure–agency can be identified. He argued that many of these models of the development process do not take into account the design as a distinctive moment in the development process. However, only the structure-agency perspective encourages seeking an approach which addresses design as an integrated element of the development process. In order to do that, the crucial relationship between use value and exchange values needs some consideration. This is because public space could be seen as an asset in exchange, using it as a resource, treating it as a commodity. Public space, therefore, can be analysed through social relations as exchange among strangers rather than as a place for functional, symbolic, or any other reasons for the community through an analysis of social relations as a set of emotional and meaningful ties.

Madanipour (1996, p. 135) also has offered a model of the development process which discusses design as an integral part of the urban development process, in which Madanipour argued that urban space is best understood not only in the process of its creation, but also within the contexts in which this process takes place. For Madanipour the space is best understood in the process of its creation, and political, economic and symbolic factors closely interact in such a process. This interdisciplinary activity of

urban design is an important constituent part of this creation. To understand urban design we will need to understand the urban space and the process that produces it.

"To find out why a particular urban form is as it is and how it is likely to change, a methodology can be used in which development agencies, the structures they interact with, and the rationalities they use can be investigated. This would provide an analytical framework with which to approach the development process and its product, the urban fabric.

This approach will be basically founded on four interrelated notions: that urban form has physical, psychological and social dimensions; that the study of urban form is best made possible by tracing the process of its development; that the development process, as a social process, will be best understood by addressing both individual actions and the structures which frame these actions; and that the understanding of this process will not be complete without addressing the social and physical contexts in which it takes place." (Madanipour, 1996, p. 135)

Madanipour (1996) provides a simplified model of the process of production of urban fabric in which he shows the component parts of the process, i.e. development agencies, development factors (resources, rules and ideas), and their contexts, are shown in both aggregate and disaggregate forms. The two main constituent parts of this process are the social and physical contexts. The model is therefore divided into two parts, each representing one of these contexts. Where these two – social and physical – contexts overlap, there is the built environment. Development factors, as structural properties of these contexts, are framed within them. Therefore, the resources are shown as stemming mainly from the physical environment but also as being incorporated into the social environment. Similarly, rules and ideas are shown as mainly stemming from the social environment but also being located within the physical environment. Where the resources and the rules and ideas overlap, the development agencies are shown to be involved in the production of new urban fabric.

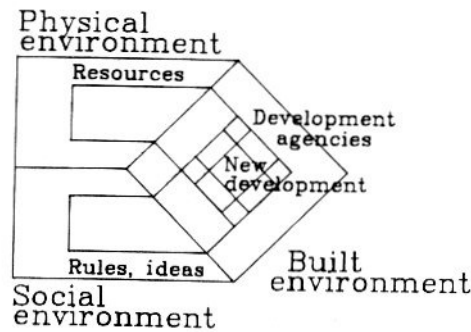


Figure 2.4 A model of the development process.
Source: Madanipour, 1996, p.136.

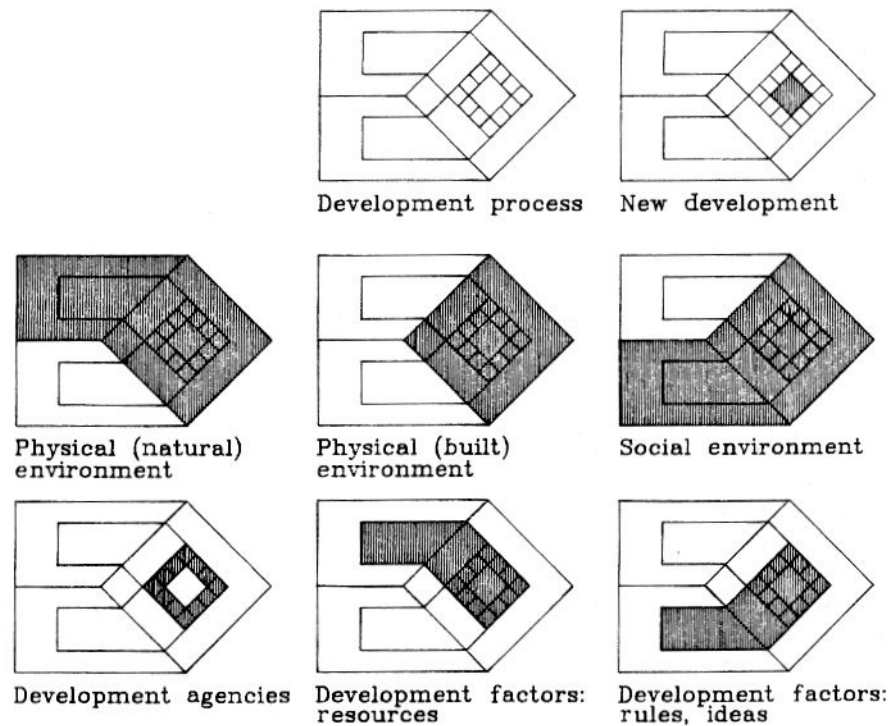


Figure 2.3 Component parts of the development process.
Source: Madanipour, 1996, p137.

Carmona *et al.* (2003), as well as Carmona and Tiesdell (2007), have also discussed the development roles and actors, pointing out that various actors are involved in the design and production process. Therefore they proposed that in order to understand the development process, it is important to identify the key actors, their objectives and motivations and their relationships with each other. Moreover different actors perform different roles in the development process. It is necessary not only to identify actors and the roles they perform, but also to understand the reason for their involvement (i.e. their motivation) (Carmona *et al.*, 2003). However, the resources and rules which are available to these actors are of equal importance to be investigated as they can boost or constrain their performance within the development process.

Many complementary issues have been identified from the above review, which are important to understand the development process. The review shows the importance of the actors and the role they play in the development process. An Institutional approach is an appropriate tool that can be used to understand the different perspectives in the debate on the concept of urban development, as is seen in the following section.

An Institutional approach

"Sooner or later all discussion of urban planning turns to institutional issues. One can define goals for urban planning and management in terms of improved living conditions, equitable access to land, shelter and basic services, the protection of environmental quality, efficient use of resources and so on, but who are the planners and managers? Are they capable of acting strategically, equitably and efficiently? Or, rather, does the institutional framework within which they operate permit them to do so? And if not how can it be improved?" (Devas and Rakodi, 1993, p.153).

Many authors have emphasised the importance of a comprehensive institutional approach to deliver good planning. Healey (1997) noted that in the 1990s, a breakdown in the traditional ways of understanding planning and development evolved as a paradigm shift from a rational comprehensive model in the 1970s, via political economy approaches in the 1980s and early 1990s, to an institutional perspective at the end of the 20th century.

Jenkins and Smith (2001a, p. 25) discussed the evolution of planning through three broad paradigms during the 20th century. The first paradigm is the 'command and control' approach, which depends on producing 'master plans' or 'blue prints' for development activities. Because of the critique of the design-based 'command and control' approach in the 1960s, attention then shifted to the actual process of development and to participation in this process. Thus there was a shift in British planning to 'planning as a process', which was based on the formulation of policy frameworks.

	Nature of planning	Planning techniques	Predominance in planning	Division of power	Assumed nature of relation	Philosophy
First Paradigm	Fixed vision of future ('blueprint')	Master plans, Zoning	State planners	Government	Common consensus exists	Rationalism
Second Paradigm	Flexible vision and specific action	Structural plans, action plans, special development areas	Public-private partnership	Government with private sector	Common consensus has to be created	Rationalism
Third Paradigm	No fixed vision	Above techniques with participatory planning	Negotiation forums	Government Private sector And civil society	Conflict needs negotiation	Relativism

Table 2.3 Paradigms of planning. Source: Carley *et al.* (2001).

In the second paradigm planning began to be perceived as “a process of conflict mediation where the role of the experts became one of advocacy”. Healey (1995, p. 253) notes that this development led to the decline in government support for planning because “the range of interests finding the opportunity for voice within the system challenged the capacity of the political-administrative nexus to keep control of both processes and agendas during the 1980s”.

This recognition of interests and how they interact has been one of the factors that has led to a shift to the third paradigm – ‘inter discursive policy formation’ – which is based, as Jenkins and Smith (2001a) noted, on embedding planning practice in its social context, which means that planning policies need to draw upon and spread the range of interests and must do so through collaborative consensus building rather than competitive interest bargaining. Also Healey (1997) reviewed the three traditions of planning thought – economic planning, physical development planning and policy analysis planning – and concluded that as they have evolved, they provide pointers to the development of institutionalist analysis and communicative approaches.

In Healey’s study of institutions (2007) she emphasised the importance of looking at the webs of relations and institutional sites through which different groups are linked together as they weave through a diffused urban governance landscape. For Healey

governance “focuses on strategies that treat the territory of the urban not just as a container in which things happen, but as a complex mixture of nodes and networks, places and flows, in which multiple relations, activities and values co-exist, interact, combine, conflict, oppress and generate creative synergy” (Healey, 2007, p.18).

To analyse governance landscapes, Healey provides three levels through which governance activity is analysed. The first level analyses specific interactions played out in a specific event of spatial strategy-making. The second level is the level of institutionalised governance, which focuses on the routinised practices and discourses of established agencies of formal government and the informal communities and networks. The third level analyses rhetorics and practices of actors involved. While the first and second level involve analysing the different actors and relations, the third level is concerned more with cultural assumptions of those who are involved in ‘doing governance’; here the focus is on values that should be prioritised and the mode of governance that is appropriate.

Institutional analysis is based on the premise that institutions matter. Jenkins & Smith (2001a) argued that realistic political, economic and institutional mechanisms are important as well as social and environmental sustainability to ensure sustainable urban solutions. The authors examine three key themes. The first focuses on the relevant roles for the major actors in urban development – the state, the market and civil society⁷ – and how these have different interests that need balancing. The second examines institutions as ‘mental models’ that underpin the very structure of politics, economics and society as ‘organizational forms’ which express relations between those in, and of relevance to urban space. The third theme examines the relationship between local and global, how local action can act within global context and how global forces adjust to local needs.

The researchers argued that urban areas are the place where both global and local forces meet and mechanisms to achieve adequate equilibrium are needed at both the global and local levels and between these levels. These mechanisms can be created by, mainly:

- realisation of the importance of all three major sectors (state, market and civil society);

⁷ “The ‘classical’ meaning ties civil society to liberal individualism and sees it in opposition to the state. The standard definitions of civil society explain it as a space between families and kin groups on the one hand, and the modern state on the other” (Hann, 1996, p. 5-6).

- acceptance that each has the right to negotiate mutual benefit; and
- adequate space for negotiation to achieve these benefits.

In the paradigm shift described above by Jenkins & Smith (2001a), they discussed the shift in the roles of the state, the market and civil society and also the institutional changes as mental models and as organisations. Madanipour (1996) argued that changes in state-market relationships have led to changes in the nature of the planning system, which in turn influences urban form and its design. Moreover, Madanipour (1996) argued that the role of the planning system, played by local and national governments, is considered one of the forms in which the state intervenes in the economy. As this form deals with the transformation and production of space, thus it occupies a central role in the interface between the state and the market.

While roles of the major actors in urban development – the state, the market and civil society – are absolutely important, institutional interests, perceptions, attitudes and capacity are of equal importance. Jenkins & Smith (2001b) studied two developing countries in transition, where they conducted in-depth empirical research in which they investigated state capacity vis-à-vis housing development and delivery in developing countries. They argued that it is important to analyse the institutional capacities within the state, market and society to understand how the capacity of the state has constrained or allowed different forms of negotiation with civil society and the private sector in a situation of transition. In other research done by Jenkins *et al.* (2005) in Angola, institutions roles and responsibilities as well as institutional attitudes, perceptions and capacity evaluation were investigated to provide a context for understanding the realities of urban development and to advance knowledge about the mechanisms for land management in practice and about potential conflicts.

Table 2.4 summarises the institutional analysis frameworks followed by the different authors reviewed above.

Authors	Analytical framework
Healey (1992)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A mapping exercise to describe events of the development process and agencies involved. -Roles and power relations between agencies involved. -The assessment of the strategies and interests of actors. -Analysis of the social relations expressed in the prevailing mode of production and the wider society.
Healey (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three levels of governance performance - Specific episodes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actors – roles, strategies, interests. • Arenas – institutional sites. - Governance processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networks and coalitions • Discourses – languages, metaphor, derived from frames of reference. • Practices. - Governance cultures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of accepted modes of governance • Range of embedded cultural values • Formal and informal processes of critique through which governing processes are rendered legitimate.
Madanipour (1996)	Development agencies, the structures they interact with, and the rationalities they use.
Jenkins & Smith (2001a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The relationships between the state, market and civil society. -The institutional structure (mental models and organization). -The local and global context.
Jenkins & Smith (2001b)	State capacity: institutional capacity, political capacity, administrative capacity, technical capacity and economic capacity.
Jenkins <i>et al.</i> (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -institutions' roles and responsibilities -institutional attitudes -institutional perceptions -institutional capacity evaluation

Table 2.4 Approaches to institutional analysis.

Reflection

The product is analysed using the framework (figure 2.2) developed previously. This reflection develops the analytical framework to analyse the process. The above review in 2.3.4 has highlighted that an institutional approach can provide a comprehensive and deep understanding of urban planning, urban development and management issues. Figure 2.5 shows the structure and its local and global levels and actors as components of a general framework for analysing the process. A key issue in analysing the development process is that the roles and relations between different actors (state, market, civil society) operating within a wider context can provide an analytical framework to analyse the process and understand it. A particular focus could be on examining specific events when applying it to particular processes and/or spaces with more focusing on understanding actors' roles, responsibilities, capacity, attitude and perceptions, and on how these actors interact. This can provide a more specific framework to analyse the process.

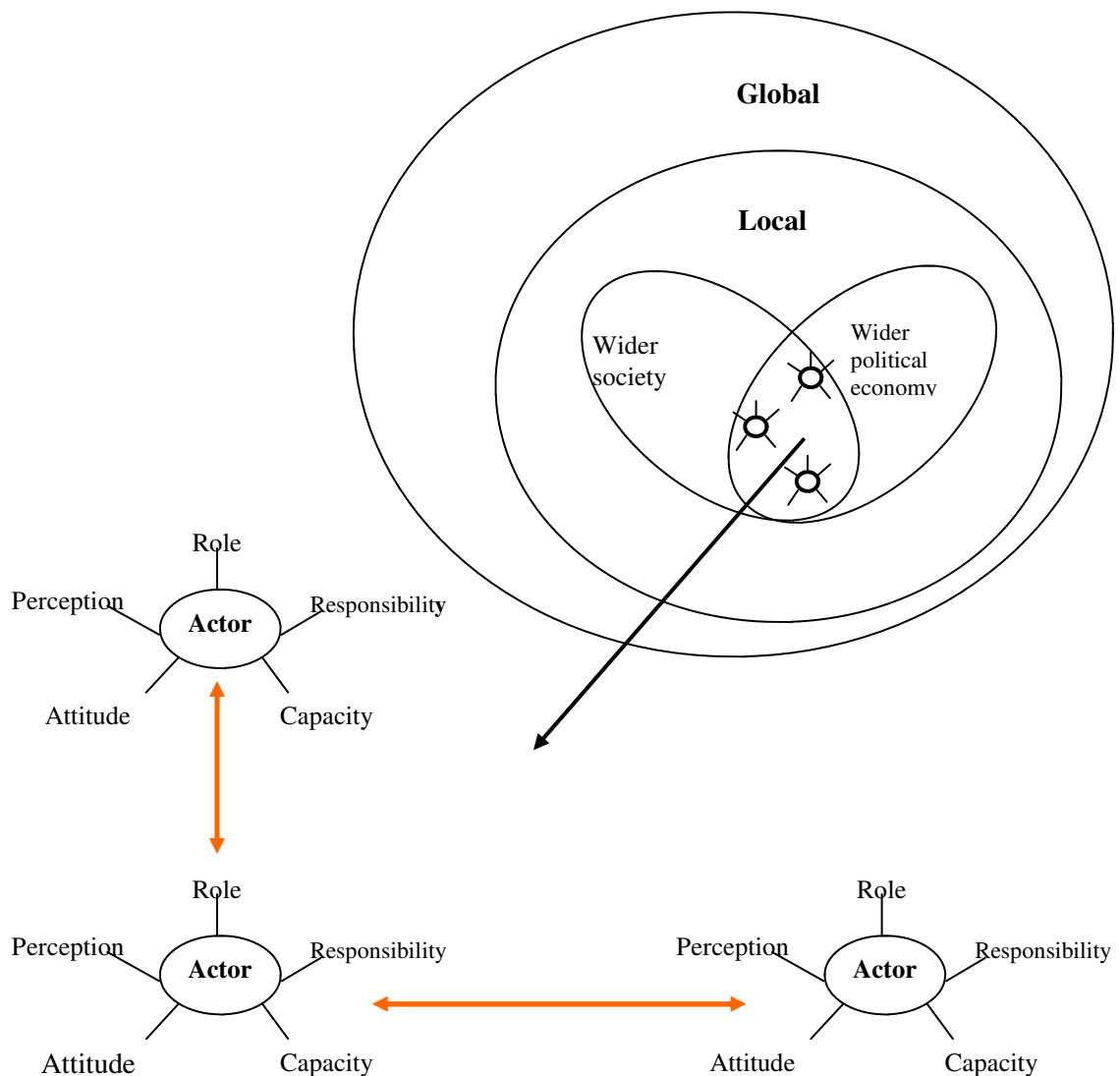


Figure 2.5 Main understanding of analysing the governance process of public space.

As the level of the analysis can be broken into several levels of focus from more general process to more specific events, the initial global/local distinction can be further broken down to many levels, such as: global, international, regional, metropolitan, urban, neighbourhood and specific space.

The above understanding shown in figure 2.5 provides a basis for the framework shown in figure 2.6, proposed here to analyse actual cases of processes whereby public spaces have been created and/or managed. The process can be analysed focusing on actors, 'rules' (related to structure) and rationale. The actors that might be involved in the process of governance of public space are described using some of the dimensions around the actors. So roles, responsibilities and capacities can be grouped under the actor itself; 'rules' can discuss the legislative frameworks and procedures set in place to define relations between the actors, their geographic area of responsibility and financial matters⁸; and perception and attitude towards public space define the rationale of actors.

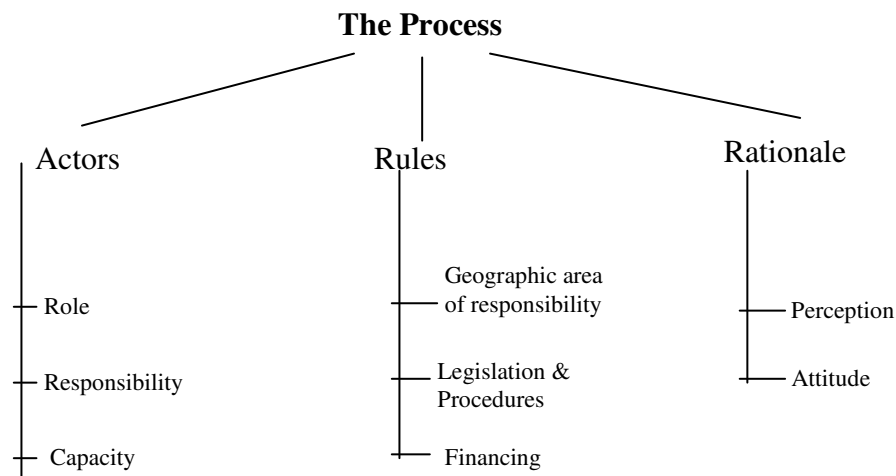


Figure 2.6 Key factors for analysis of the governance process whereby public space is created or managed.

⁸ Geographic area of responsibility as one rule affecting the governance process arose from the fieldwork and this will be justified in chapter 6, but it has been included here from the beginning for the sake of clarity. Financing is another rule emerging from the survey of other cities' experiences in chapter 4 as an important rule affecting the process.

2.4 The general structure for analysis

The above review of theories and approaches by different authors on the definition of public space and public realm, and of approaches to analysing public spaces as a product and process, has also been used to propose frameworks for analysis of public space as a product and of the process around its creation and management. This section briefly discusses how such frameworks have been used as a guiding tool throughout the research (see also Chapter 3 on Methodology).

The emphasis in this research is more on the process than the product. However, the three categories which have been identified in the review of urban space as a product from a morphological and functional perspective (urban form, movement and use and function), and the sub-categories these are divided into (see the list of 20 indicators developed in section 2.3.3 – figure 2.2) are used in chapter 5 to Damascus case study at two level. The three main categories and sub-categories guide the analysis of the historical development of public space in Damascus, while the 20 indicators are used to analyse two particular examples of public spaces in the historic core of Damascus. These indicators are examined in the two case studies of public spaces according to the criteria provided in table 2.2.

The review of the different approaches to analysing the process of producing urban development (including public spaces) in section 2.3.4 is the basis for figure 2.6, which is proposed as a framework to analyse the process of producing public spaces in this research. This framework proposes that, within the city level, the process can be analysed by defining all the concerned actors, the rules (which includes investigating geographic scope of responsibilities, relevant laws, regulations and procedures) to show how these interact, and their rationales, including their perception and attitudes towards the historic fabric and public spaces.

As the main emphasis in this research is on the process more than on the product, the analytical framework that is summarised in figure 2.6 is used in chapter 4 to examine some examples of public space production/regeneration processes in cities around the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. This review of public spaces allows the researcher to test the framework, explore its limitations, and validate it. Then this framework is used in chapter 6 to analyse the process of governing /producing public spaces in the historic core of Damascus.

2.5 Conclusions

In addressing research questions 1a and 1b (see chapter 1, section 1.3), this chapter provides an overview of the theories and approaches to analyse public realm and public space. The literature shows that definitions of public realm vary among authors, with those drawing on a more sociological approach distinguishing more clearly between public realm and public space. This research understands public space as one physical component of the city which has an important role in reflecting its image and potentially providing for socialisation. The review has identified urban form, movement and use and activities as the main aspects which sum up a morphological and functional approach to the analysis of public space as a product – such approach being considered the most relevant to the subject of this research.

The main focus of this research is, however, on process. A significant body of literature provides different approaches to analyse the process of producing and managing public space as process noted in this chapter. Five approaches or models could be identified and grouped differently by different authors. These are equilibrium, event-sequence, agency, structure and institutional models. Increasingly the process of producing and managing public space is analysed following an institutional approach through defining the actors (roles, responsibilities and capacities) the rules and the rationale they use in producing public spaces and understanding how this is articulated into the built environment, which seems appropriate to understand the context of production public space.

These key conclusions from Chapter 2 have informed the methodology and the research methods that the researcher applied, which are detailed more in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a review of the main planning and urban design theories surrounding the main theoretical framework – ‘product & process’ in the production of urban space – adopted for this research and the formulation of the conceptual framework. This chapter explains the overall methodology taken by the researcher in an attempt to answer the research questions. It firstly describes the main ‘research paradigms’ and their different methods, including the case study approach, in order to then present the approach to the methodology of this research. Secondly it discusses the data collection methods used in this research, including literature review, fieldwork, semi-structured interviews and direct observation, and explains the background to, and justification for, the case studies selected for this study. Data analysis methods used in this research are then explained. Finally, the limitations of this research are examined.

3.2 Theoretical background on research methodologies

3.2.1 Positivist and post- positivist research paradigms

There are different knowledge traditions impacting on the approach of research. Each tradition is still debated both for and against. Two significant research paradigms underlie these traditions: positivism and relativism. The positivist approach is rooted in the physical sciences while relativism comes under qualitative, ethnographic, ecological and naturalistic approaches more associated with the social sciences. The main question which divides between the two paradigms is whether the methodology of physical sciences can be applied to understand social phenomena (Kumar, 2005).

Positivists see the world as existing independently of our knowledge of it, so they believe in patterns, regularities, causes and consequences. Positivists put great emphasis on explanation, concerned with ‘fact’ more than ‘value’. They seek objectivity in research and believe in the possibility of establishing regular relationships between social phenomena by using theory to generate hypotheses (Grix, 2004, p.80 – 81).

Generally, for analysing the social world, positivist research employs scientific methods which are seen as neutral and not disturbing what exists.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, positivism became a focus for debate as the possibility that science could give all the answers was questioned. Investigation of the complex social world means embedding in a world full of flexible theories of chaos and complexity. The positivist tradition is still facing ongoing issues of contention about its ability to explain this complexity, its limitations being seen as coming from viewing knowledge as being able to be deduced from careful processes of hypothesising, variable identification and measurement within experimental designs resulting in the identification of causality. Moreover, knowledge includes not only sense experiences but also intuition and thought process, which depend on the nature of the questions asked and how these are addressed (Grbich, 2007, p. 5).

The basic assumption of positivism, that the world is ordered and that to understand it standard scientific procedures based on deduction must be used, therefore came under question and critiques led to various overlapping approaches arising. According to Mark (1996), since the 1970s many researchers in the social sciences have turned to another type of research which departs from the traditional scientific method. A similar view is given by Grbich (2007, p.6-7), who noted that during the 1960s and 70s social critics pointed to societal fragmentation, the outcome of industrialisation and its changes in the economic system, realising that understanding reality 'requires a range of approaches including those beyond the scientific'.

According to Grbich (2007) there are four broad epistemological traditions: positivism, critical emancipatory positions, interpretivism and postmodern positions. It is true that these latter post-positivist approaches share a common characteristic in their rejection of positivism, but it is still possible to find a wide range of approaches and choice of methods among them. While critical traditions view reality as being produced by particular social and political systems comprising competing interests where knowledge is controlled to serve those in power, interpretivists view reality as socially and societally embedded and existing within the mind.

Grix (2004) pointed out that in contrast to positivism, interpretivists see the world as not existing independently of our knowledge of it, with there being no clear distinction

between fact and value. Interpretivists distinguish between social and natural sciences and rely on understanding the social world depending on subjective analysis. Grix (2004, p.85) argued also that critical realism is an important paradigm which come between positivism and interpretivism: “Since the 1970s, a powerful alternative to both positivism, with its search for regular laws, and interpretivism, has grown in importance”. Critical realist researchers try to combine between two approaches: understanding (how) and explanation (why). They seek to understand and explain the social world.

The researcher very much agrees that positivist approaches are questionable as a means to understand the complexity of the social world. However, this research is based on a belief that a combination of both positivist and post-positivist approaches and their methods (i.e. critical realism) could be used in order to conduct a study of social phenomena. The researcher’s area of interest is the design of public spaces in historic Damascus, and the overall aim of undertaking this research was to understand how public spaces in historic Damascus could be improved. This needs, in the first instance, understanding of these spaces and why they are deteriorated, which requires understanding the nature of public spaces and investigating the governance process of public spaces in historic Damascus. The critical realist approach adopted in this research combined a more ‘objective’ approach based on measurement of certain features of the public spaces in order to assess these (see criteria for evaluation of open space in Chapter 2) and analysis of documents to trace governance processes in theory, with a more ‘subjective’ approach based on stakeholders’ perceptions and attitudes, accessed through semi-structured interviews.

3.2.2 Qualitative and quantitative research methods

Social research methods can take two main approaches: quantitative and qualitative research. While the quantitative approach uses numerical means to study phenomena and relies on measurement and standard statistics, the qualitative approach uses general description to explain and study phenomena. These approaches refer to types of measurement, as Mark (1996) argued, rather than to research paradigms, however, in the past two decades the ‘qualitative approach’ has also been used to refer to a research paradigm.

In the 1920s and 1930s the qualitative approach developed in sociology with the ‘Chicago school’ of sociologists, who felt that quantitative methods could not fulfil their aim to understand the world and thus descriptive, qualitative methods were best for understanding how people interact in groups (Mark, 1996). Therefore, the qualitative approach has been developed from an understanding of the relationship between how researchers think about the world and how they conduct research: “Qualitative research sets out to tell you why things happen” (Moore, 2006, p.150).

A concise definition of qualitative approach is found in Groat & Wang (2002, p.176):

“Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials.”

The above definition highlights the position of researchers who undertake qualitative research, and who still have to think through thoroughly and rationally the methodology of their research, which entails them understanding and explaining the philosophical considerations of the approach they have chosen (MaQueen & Knussen, 2002). Furthermore, qualitative data is empirical information that is predominantly not numerical and it is generated rather than collected. Interviews, documents, visual images can all be used as a source of data, but it is the researcher’s epistemological position that determines how that data is generated. In other words, as Grix (2004) argued, a researcher’s methodological approach, underpinned by and reflecting specific assumptions, represents a choice of approach and research methods adopted in a given study.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Capacity to take in rich and holistic qualities of real life circumstances.	Challenge of dealing with vast quantities of data.
Flexibility in design and procedures allowing adjustments in process.	Few guidelines or step-by-step procedures established.
Sensitivity to meanings and processes of artefacts and people’s activities.	The credibility of qualitative data can be seen as suspect within the post-positivist paradigm.

Table 3.1 Strengths and weaknesses of the qualitative approach.

Source: Groat & Wang, 2002, p. 199.

Groat and Wang (2002) were very explicit in explaining qualitative research's strengths and weaknesses (see Table 3.1). The strengths of qualitative research can provide some advantages, but this also comes with some costs. Researchers wishing to employ a qualitative research design will find relatively few step-by-step guidelines in the literature; the researcher is thus obliged to exercise extra care and thoughtfulness throughout the research study. Another major challenge concerns the vast amount of unstructured data that must be coded and analysed, a task that is enormously time consuming. Also, "for researchers working in fields where a more rationalistic paradigm holds sway, the (trustworthiness) of qualitative data may remain suspect, despite the efforts of qualitative methodologists to show that such research can be systematic" (Groat & Wang, 2002, p.199).

Although there is a dichotomy between the two, quantitative 'objective' and qualitative 'subjective' approaches can exist side by side or even overlap in the same study. Some researchers consider that the dichotomy between the two is a false one (Marsden & Oakley cited in Smith, 1999; Grix, 2004). The researcher agrees with the view that "no one method is better than any other, but some methods are more relevant to your project than others" (Grix, 2004, p.125). This is also what Flyvbjerg (2004, p.432) emphasised when he stated that "good social science is problem-driven and not methodology-driven, in the sense that it employs those methods that for a given problematic best help answer the research questions at hand".

The researcher uses a number of data collection methods which are mainly qualitative but also quantitative. However, the emphasis in this research is on process (how open spaces in historic Damascus can be improved), which is analysed on the basis of qualitative data because, as Mark (1996) argues, qualitative research develops a general knowledge about process and events. In what follows, the researcher presents these specific methods. First, however, she outlines the case study approach as a significant methodological choice for this research and the general approach taken towards designing data collection and analysing the data.

3.2.3 Case study approach

Gillham (2000, p.1) defined the case study as an approach to investigate an individual, a group, an institution, community or multiple cases – “It all depends what you want to find out” – in order to answer the research question. This approach seeks many types of evidence: “evidence which is there in the case setting, and which has to be abstracted and collated to get the best possible answers to the research question” Gillham (2000, p.1-2). Another definition of case study is given by Yin (1994) as: “Empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1994, cited in Grix, 2004, p.51). Three types of case study can be identified:

- Descriptive – to give a detailed account of a particular issue, person or process;
- Exploratory – carried out with the intention of testing initial working hypotheses, checking for availability of, and access to, relevant data, ascertaining the relevant variables for a study and assessing the suitability of the case for further, more extensive, research; and
- Explanatory – in which researchers seek to make generalisations by extrapolating the single case-study’s findings to other cases (Yin, 1994 cited in Grix, 2004, p.51-52).

Groat & Wang (2002, p.346) cited the same definition with some amendments to be “an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon or setting”. These authors argued that by deleting the word “contemporary” and adding “setting” they include historic phenomena and both historic and contemporary settings as potential foci of case studies, thus making the definition more applicable to architectural research – and, this researcher would argue urban design research. The primary characteristics of the case study can be summarised as follows:

- a focus on studying phenomena or settings embedded in their real-life context;
- the capacity to explain causal links;
- the role of theory development in the research design phase;
- using multiple sources of evidence;
- generalisability to theory (Groat & Wang, 2002, p.346-355).

Groat & Wang (2002) argued that the above characteristics give rise to many of the strengths of the case study research, though it has some weaknesses, as summarised in Table 3.2.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Embeddedness of the case in its context	Potential for over-complication
Capacity to explain causal links	'Causality' likely to be multi-faceted and complex
The need for multiple sources of evidence	Challenge of integrating many data sources in a coherent way
Ability to generalize to theory	Replication required in other cases
Compelling and convincing when done well	Difficult to do well; fewer established rules and procedures than other research designs.

Table 3.2 Strengths and weaknesses of the case study.
Source: Groat & Wang, 2002, p. 360.

Qualitative approaches through the case study methodology have been criticised on the basis that it is subjective and that it is difficult to generalise from a single case. However, Flyvbjerg (2004, p.420-432) addressed the misunderstandings around case study research and elucidated its strengths as follows:

- The case study method produces context-dependent knowledge, which is well adequate for social science in which predictive theory is absent. Thus, proof is very difficult to achieve but learning is possible.
- From a case study, we can often generalise and therefore the case study can contribute to scientific development. The careful selection of appropriate case studies can ensure that there is great opportunity to generalise findings. Choosing an extraordinary case which involves many actors and strategies, can lead to the discovery of more information about the phenomenon or the situation we are studying. Most importantly, analysing few cases can help explore the causes and consequences of the problem more deeply, whereas random samples can “describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur” (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p.425).
- Since we can generalise on the basis of a single case, case study is also useful for both generating and testing of hypotheses.
- A criticism of case study research is that the researchers tend to verify their preconceived thoughts about the problem or phenomenon, but

according to Flyvbjerg it appears that through their research in many cases they end up with falsification of their ideas.

- The final misunderstanding about case studies is that they are difficult to summarise. This is true with regard to the process and less in relation to the outcomes. The problem with summarising is due more to “the properties of the reality studied than to the case study as a research method. Often it is not desirable to summarize and generalize case studies. Good studies should be read as narratives in their entirety” (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p.432).

Though defending the case study approach, Flyvbjerg does not reject the research of large random samples, arguing that this type of quantitative research is essential for the development of social science, but noting that while the problem of large samples is one of depth, the case study presents the reverse situation.

On the other hand, Grix (2004) noted that doing case study research entails the researcher being aware of how the type of study links with the level and unit of analysis. There are two levels:

- Micro- level, individual or actor-centred;
- Macro- level, system or structure-centred.

Using the two is possible as long as the researcher is aware of which level he/she is using throughout the research process.

Taking into account the above argument, the researcher agrees with Flyvbjerg (2004) that in general the case study method can contribute to the cumulative development of knowledge. Despite the difficulty of the approach taken with the analytical framework defined in chapter 2, which looks at the country, city and specific space levels – both in relation to public space as a ‘product’ and to the ‘process’ that produces it – this research adds new knowledge to the questions addressed and provides a rich source of evidence and interpretation. Furthermore, close investigation of the changes in nature of public spaces as a ‘product’ and analysis of the governance processes of public spaces in the historic fabric of Damascus generate new questions and highlight a further research agenda to be addressed.

3.2.4 The approach taken to data collection and analysis

After defining the main research question and the relevant epistemological basis, in order to answer the question of how are public spaces in historic Damascus changing and governed, the design of this research is located closer to an iterative approach within a basic hermeneutic tradition of inquiry, which is one of the four types of qualitative inquiry as defined by Grbich (2007, p.20): “interpretive inquiry seeking to understand the meanings of parts within a whole”. This approach involved going to Damascus, collecting data, using preliminary data analysis to determine ‘what is going on’ in order to build up a picture of the data emerging, and to guide the researcher in the next set of data collection when returning to Damascus to find out more. This process was repeated and in post data collection a thematic analysis was used until no new data emerged and all possible aspects of the questions appear to have been answered. More information on preliminary data analysis and thematic analysis is provided in section 3.4.1.

3.3 Data collection methods

The methods used in data collection are described in this section. These include: literature review; case studies; fieldtrip data collection including collection of grey literature and other documentation; direct observation and in-depth/semi-structured interviews.

3.3.1 Literature review

The literature review is considered an important part throughout the whole of the research process (Groat & Wang, 2002). General and in depth-literature review has been carried out throughout the research, constantly developing these as the ideas were formed and expanded.

Diagram 3.1 illustrates the relationship of the literature review to the overall research process. The researcher looks in two directions: the first one is the main question he/she is trying to answer; the second direction is the audience who receive the results. The researcher tries to answer the main question by means of research strategies and tactics. Urban planning and urban design and methodology are two bodies of literature which the researcher drew upon through literature review. The arrows which go from the

literature to the various junctures of the research process indicate literature review and they show how the literature review contributes to every aspect of the process. Finally, the research results relate to the literature by expanding it. So the literature review is an ongoing activity.

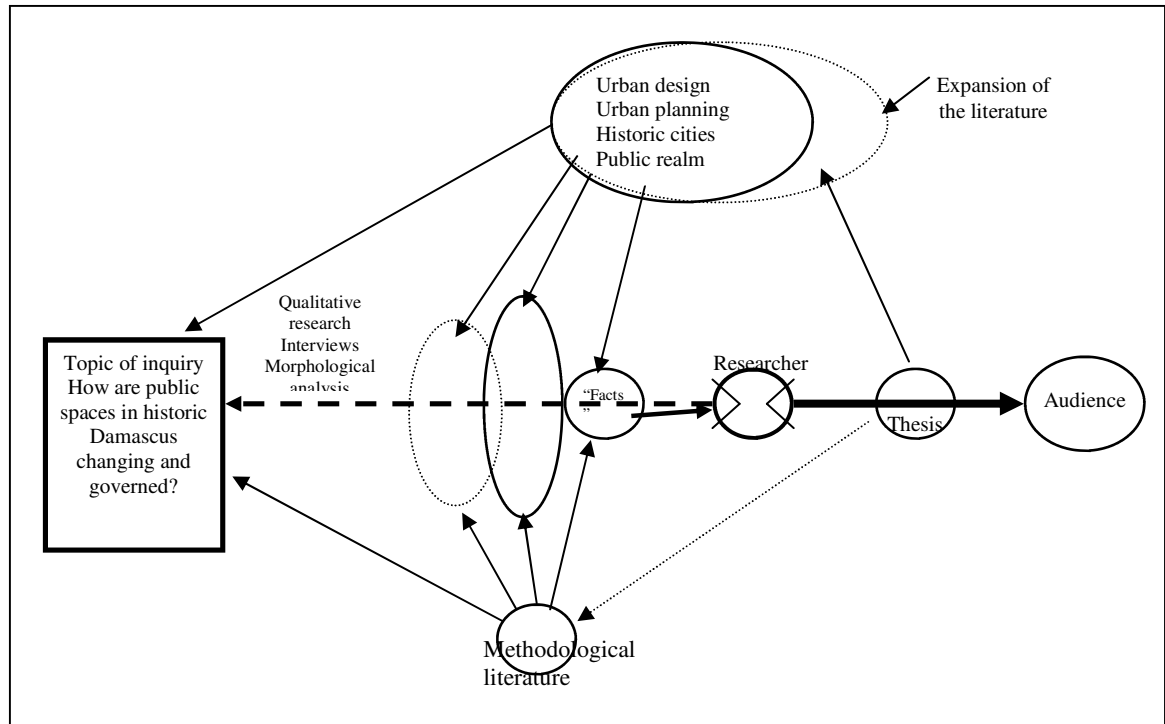


Figure 3.1 Diagrammatic structure for a research study.

Source: Adapted by the researcher from Groat & Wang (2002).

A combination of academic and professional literature review was carried out. An academic literature was conducted on urban planning, urban design, and social science research methods, focusing on areas relevant to the regeneration of the public realm. A review of the professional literature focused mainly on public spaces and drew on literature which is generated through the reports of development agencies such as AKTC, RehabiMed and UNESCO. The focus of these resources is linked to the main aim of the research: the governance process of public space in historic cities.

In relation to the cases used in the survey, books and academic journals were the principal sources consulted. Some specific books and reports were obtained upon undertaking the fieldtrips to Damascus and Barcelona (see 3.3.2 below). A more specific literature review addressing issues related to Damascus and Syrian context was also undertaken. This literature includes urban development in Syria and the history of Damascus, drawing mainly from Arabic sources consulted during the fieldtrips to Damascus as well as some

books available in the National Library in Edinburgh. Another type of document which was consulted included grey literature comprising reports and plans by the Syrian central government and other agencies (Damascus Governorate, Order of Syrian Engineers, General Company for Technical Studies and Consulting, the library of the French Institute for Arabic Studies and Damascus University).

3.3.2 Case studies

Historic fabric of Damascus as a case study

A body of literature (in Arabic) includes postgraduate studies and projects, which focus mainly on the historical development and physical transformation of public space in the historic fabric. However, there are no available studies of the detailed governance process of public spaces in historic settings. There is an attempt in this research to address this previously unexplored gap in order to investigate the rationalities and processes influencing the governance and thus upgrading of public spaces in the historic fabric of Damascus, and thus to achieve a clearer understanding of the process.

By doing so the researcher could advance understanding of **why** the deterioration of the public spaces in the historic fabric in Damascus is continuing, and this helps answer the main question of this research concerning **how** public spaces in the historic fabric of Damascus can be regenerated. In this sense, the researcher shares Mark's view (1996, p.218) that "case studies are valuable because they provide great detail that helps us to understand the complexities of human behaviour". On the other hand the researcher agrees with Smith (1999) when he argued that the analysis of case studies should be underpinned by a knowledge of the general context in which the case studies are located – in this case, the Syrian context, Damascus's history, heritage issues and planning issues and policy.

Therefore, a case study approach is adopted as part of the mainly qualitative approach taken to describe issues of process. The focus is on the historic fabric, particularly near the city centre of Damascus as a case study area. This fabric is significant because it contains the old city inside the wall as well as some suburbs outside the city wall which developed since the 12th century. The old city was listed as a world heritage site in 1979 and it is considered to be one of the oldest inhabited cities in the World. However, this fabric has witnessed much deterioration since independence as a consequence of

modernisation trends which developed public squares as a concept to emphasise monumentality, but failed to be fully implemented. This approach entailed demolishing parts of the historic fabric as the first step in the process without upgrading the resulting open spaces or redesigning them. This incomplete implementation (process) has led to open wounds in the historic fabric which are deteriorated, dominated by car use or used as parking lots (product).

This problem is growing, particularly with governmental institutions dominating the decision making and design stages, and being recognised as the official approach to area upgrading. This is because the political model in Syria, as well as many other countries in the Arab region, favoured a state-centred role in the regeneration process. In this, as Grindle and Thomas (1989) argued, the state both defines the social problems and also solves them. However, Syria now is in a transition period from being a state-owned economy to a social market economy, so the country is going through a reform process in which the administrative and institutional changes are essential tools which affect its capacity to undertake this dual role in all sectors.

Open spaces in historic Damascus as case studies

It can be argued that the exploration of the governance process in the case study could become very descriptive and the analysis can be obscured by detail. However, such pitfalls were minimised in this research by following a flexible analysis and providing details and general information. This research started by understanding the evolution of public space and public realm as a 'product' at the level of Damascus – the city being one level of case study. Then the research focused on the morphological and functional analysis of two public spaces as specific case studies within the historic city centre. *Bab Tuma* space and the Citadel space⁹ were chosen by the researcher because their situation is seen as problematic in the historic fabric and they also share common characteristics, such as being both located on the edge of the old city and near significant historical monuments. These spaces offer two types of case studies among different types in case study methodology. The first is the Citadel space which is a unique (extreme) case study which holds symbolic importance and deals with the problems of open spaces at the city

⁹ *Bab Tuma* is known as *Sahet Bab Tuma*, which means in English *Bab Tuma* square, but it lacks the physical qualities support this concept. Citadel space has no specific name and it is known as a junction of the two streets *Al Nasser* Street and *Al Thawra* Street. For these reasons, the researcher called these two cases as spaces.

level. While the second is *Bab Tuma* space which is a typical case and which holds importance for the city, but at the neighbourhood level. *Bab Tuma* is a case which shows the threat of changes in land use and the changes in the nature of the public realm for the residents themselves.

In terms of process, the research explored the administrative system, and heritage and planning legislation at the city level, and went on to reflect their impact on public spaces through the development of scenarios of actor involvement. In relation to examining this further at site-specific level, the researcher focused on one specific space studied within the city – *Bab Tuma* – to allow an evaluation which focuses on the difficulties in producing quality public space. In addition, the researcher applied some triangulation by comparing and contrasting some information from one source (e.g. an interview) against other sources (e.g. other interviews, literature review, grey literature, etc). This reflects Gillham's (2000) view that it is likely to be insufficient to rely on one source of evidence and the use of multiple sources of evidence is a main feature of case study research.

Mediterranean historic centres as case studies

In order to address key research objective 4, a survey approach was adopted, analysing several cases of Mediterranean cities in which open spaces in their historical fabric have been regenerated. This survey relied exclusively on literature review and other secondary sources for all case study cities except Barcelona, where data collection was aided by a fieldtrip (see below). This reliance on secondary sources may be seen as superficial to some extent; however, this approach allowed the generation of a set of illustrative cases which highlight wider abstract principles, in the sense argued by Groat & Wang (2002).

Cities from the Mediterranean area were chosen for the survey because they have significant historic cores facing similar urban pressures (see chapter 4). Specific cities included in the survey are: Aleppo, Cairo, Tunis and Barcelona. The city of Aleppo in northern Syria has undergone a regeneration process since 1994 in its old city in collaboration with the international agency GTZ (German Technical Cooperation). Cairo and Tunis have, to some extent, similar political and economic contexts and share similarities in terms of cultural issues, historical context and process of development. In

addition, regeneration projects have been implemented in their historic cores, including the upgrading and improvement of open spaces, and these projects have been documented. All the selected cities for the survey, except Barcelona, are related to the Southern Eastern Mediterranean Countries (SEMC).

Barcelona is from the Northern Mediterranean Countries (NMC), and was included in order to achieve wider comparison. In addition, Barcelona as a Mediterranean city shares some historical and cultural legacies with Damascus. A further reason to include it in the survey is that it is an outstanding example of city improvement relevant to the focus of this research:

1. It is a good example of how institutions interact to generate a process of public space improvement, involving a wide range of stakeholders (Marshall, 2004).
2. A public space strategy was developed, which changed planning to achieve the liveable city: "Planning was changed from the traditional long-term planning of function and area, where the initiative for implementation is largely dependent on the investment interest of private industry, to an active city policy, in which the public sector initiated renewal by designing dozens of new public spaces, parks and squares" (Gehl & Gemzøe, 2001, p.26).

Moreover, Barcelona has in the past 10 to 15 years become the outstanding example of a certain way of improving cities within the Mediterranean world, in Europe and even globally: "The city of Barcelona has become internationally recognized for the bold programs of urban regeneration initiated by its city council"(Miranda 2006, p.1). In 1999 Barcelona was awarded the Golden Medal of The Royal Institute of British Architects (Marshall, 2004). And importantly for the purposes of data collection, Barcelona's experience is well published and has been proposed as a model of urban regeneration in several books, reports and academic journals (e.g. PAP and RAC, 2004). It is worth mentioning that the rehabilitation project of the old city of Aleppo was awarded the Veronica Rudge Green Prize¹⁰ in urban design, alongside Mexico City and Barcelona (Busquets, 2005).

¹⁰ The Green Prize has established since 1986 as a means by which the Harvard Design School community can recognize international urban design excellence through projects that contribute to the public realm of the city and improve the overall quality of urban life.

This survey was undertaken on the basis that lessons from it would still need to be adapted to local context. This point was highlighted by Davidson (2008) when he explained that there are a variety of local conditions and it is dangerous to derive a general ‘truth’ out of looking at many experiences¹¹. Furthermore, the researcher hopes that this research is a start to emphasise the importance of local research and the need to link this research with policy and practice, and highlight this through the education system in Syria. This point was noted in the Regional Management Support Unit (RMSU)¹² of the Euromed Heritage Programme report (2006, p.2), which indicated that “Syrian training offer is weak at the university as well at vocational levels and could be reinforced through the creation of a national research training centre or curricula development in the existing 4 universities (Damascus, Aleppo, Latakia, Homs). A recommendation in this sense should be addressed to the Syrian government (e.g. Ministry of Higher Education)”.

The above point is very important because all the academic interviewees who the researcher talked to throughout the research process tried to persuade her to look elsewhere and investigate other cases, with a great belief that other cities’ solutions would fit Damascus’s urban problems. It is not wrong to analyse other cases and/or to undertake an international comparison, but lessons from this need to be implemented based on a comprehensive understanding of local needs and problems. As Davidson (2008) emphasised, “generic policies can be dangerous if not applied/modified sensitively”, and the way to do that is through a comprehensive understanding of local problems through local research. Shechter and Yacobi (2005b) called for planning that relies on country-specific and better to treat changing contexts in finding local solutions to the problems.

3.3.3 Fieldtrip data collection

One fieldtrip to Barcelona in November 2006 and three fieldtrips to Damascus – took place in December 2004/January 2005, December 2006/January 2007 and

¹¹ Forbes Davidson discussed this point to answer “does one size really fit all?” at the 9th N-AERUS workshop on securing positive change in international urban poverty reduction policies, held at the Centre of Environment and Human Settlement, School of the Built Environment, Heriot-Watt University, 12th December 2008.

¹² RMSU organized a focus group which includes 31 participants belonging to GOs, NGOs, universities and civil society organizations, who met and discussed country needs in the cultural heritage sector in three levels: human resources, legislative and institutional framework.

September/October 2007 – were carried out during this research. Fieldtrips are a significant method for data collection because they include different methods to collect data. For this research these were: visiting libraries and other sources of documentary evidence, site visits and interviews. Libraries provided secondary data such as postgraduate projects and studies which were mainly on the history of Damascus and some spaces in the historic fabric. Site visits provided an opportunity to generate wider and more specific data than what is available in written format – e.g. photographs, notes and drawings. This data was particularly important for the morphological analysis (see section 3.4). Fieldtrips also enabled the researcher to contact people who were involved in the governance process and doing semi-structured interviews, which permitted her to obtain information. This information was in the form of grey literature, such as regulatory and policy documents, government publications and specific reports regarding the selected spaces which are in Arabic language or have not been published, in addition to personal views and observations, which all have a great value for qualitative research.

The fieldtrip to Barcelona was during 8-15th November 2006. This fieldtrip involved interviews with planners, professionals and architects from the academic body. These interviews helped the researcher to locate references both from the interviewees as well as from the library of the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya. In addition, the researcher visited and documented many public spaces inside and on the edge of the historic core of Barcelona (Ciutat Vella). The interviews and the visits on-site helped the researcher to obtain data in written format which is not available in the UK.

3.3.4 In-depth/semi-structured interviews

During the first fieldtrip to Damascus most of the information was gathered through informal conversation mostly with academics. The conversations revolved around key issues such as the planning situation in Syria and the urban form of Damascus and its development. Only three people were interviewed, two being professors in the Faculty of Architecture/Damascus University, who have worked with the public sector since 1960s. The other person was from the French Institute in Damascus, who kindly provided the researcher with documents about the old city of Damascus.

During the second fieldtrip to Damascus a total of eleven interviews with academics, professionals and government staff were undertaken. Interviewees were selected according to the needs of the conceptual framework which had been developed (see chapter 2), particularly the part focused on process. Although no detailed interview guide was used in this fieldtrip, the interviews were focused on certain key issues such as identifying main actors involved in the process, their perception, rationality used and mapping institutional arrangements. In addition data was gathered relating to specific proposals for the spaces selected, workshops held and master plans. The aim was to identify the design aspects covered in such proposals and the actors involved in this process.

During the third field trip, a total of 29 interviews with key actors were undertaken including local government, professionals, planners and managers of international donor agency projects. The researcher used an interview guide for semi-structured interviews, which enabled the researcher to explore the general perception of the historic fabric and the selected open spaces. In addition it helped to investigate the roles, responsibilities and interests of key actors, the structures they interact with and the rationalities they use in the governance process. In addition, significant grey literature was collected and reviewed.

It is worth mentioning that the interviewees from the international agencies had worked in regeneration projects of the historic fabric in other cities. This was a great opportunity to compare different views and discussions in relation to the cities defined for the survey. In addition, significant documents were collected and reviewed, which constituted another useful source of data for the survey of Mediterranean cities.

During the fieldtrip to Barcelona five interviews were undertaken with planners, professionals and architects from the academic body. Contacts with the interviewees were facilitated by the long-standing connections the first supervisor of this research, Dr Harry Smith, has with Spain, including Barcelona itself, as well as by the regular contacts the School of the Built Environment has with this city such as through the annual 4th year Civil Engineering field trip. This fieldtrip facilitated access to data in written format and gave an opportunity to visit relevant sites in the old city of Barcelona. However, it was short in time and there was a problem with language, as limited information was available in English.

A sample of the interview guide used in the third field trip to Damascus is provided in Appendix 3.1; an account of the process of interview arrangement is provided in Appendix 3.2; and the type and number of interviewees in each field trip is provided in Appendix 3.3.

3.3.5 Direct observation

The researcher spent some time visiting the selected open spaces in Damascus, during which she observed the spaces and their usage, took notes and photos in order to be able to assess them according to the criteria developed from the literature review (see section 2.5).

3.4 Data analysis methods

In this section the researcher describes the methods used in data analysis which include: preliminary data analysis and thematic analysis, secondary analysis, morphological analysis and concept maps.

3.4.1 Preliminary data analysis and thematic analysis

Grbich (2007, p.16) defined preliminary data analysis as:

“a technique which can be undertaken on most data as each segment is collected. It serves to summarise issues emerging and to identify further questions which need to be asked in order to gain holistic data. Thematic analysis is commonly used in qualitative research and occurs when all the data are in. It is a process of segmentation, categorisation and relinking of aspects of the database prior to the final interpretation”.

The researcher did some preliminary data analysis during transcription of some of the interviews, where permissions were obtained prior to recording; otherwise, notes during and after each non-recorded interview were made on the general outcome. This was done to check the data and engage with the text but not to critique it as much as to see what was coming up from the data and to identify the areas which needed follow-up, and also to identify other actors who needed to be interviewed. After the preliminary

data analysis the researcher moved on to interpreting in written and graphic formats, and to undertake the more formal process of thematic analysis.

In thematic analysis the researcher listened many times to the recorded interviews and analysed descriptive data, implementing a data reduction process. This was useful in a process of building up a holistic view of actors' perception of the historic fabric and open spaces. The reduction process was followed in order to manage the data grouping it. This process was carried out by a combination of block and file approach (creating a matrix) and conceptual mapping. Moreover, conceptual mapping was used as a way of displaying findings which is further explained in section 3.4.4.

3.4.2 Secondary analysis

Moore (2006, p.111) defined the secondary analysis of existing datasets as a powerful research technique: "secondary analysis of data where the focus is firmly on the reworking of existing datasets to develop new insights into issues". This form of analysis has been used throughout this research. This method has been mainly used in the survey of other Mediterranean cities' experiences, where literature was collected from other sources such as academic books and journals, and then restructured again according to the conceptual framework defined in chapter 2.

Documentary analysis has been used throughout the research, particularly for chapters 4, 5 and 6. This includes grey literature such as reports and governmental documents. In the case of Damascus, this was included the analysis of the notes of meetings produced by neighbourhood committees, which were collected during the fieldtrips.

3.4.3 Morphological analysis using maps and documents

The researcher redrew some maps of the city (the old city and its surroundings) and the two spaces using AutoCAD in order to do some morphological analysis, since obtaining digitised data (such as AutoCAD drawings or maps) was very restricted in Damascus. Sometimes the researcher needed to investigate different maps to get the necessary information for producing the map which was used for the analysis. Information and notes taken during the site visits were then shown on this map. This analysis helped the researcher to show changes in the historic fabric such as that in the nature of the open spaces, to highlight the old city and its surrounding, to show the transformations in the

two selected spaces and to conduct qualitative assessment for these spaces. Also, analysing old photographs from historical books (in Arabic) helped the researcher to reconstruct the past traditional situation and summarise the key events which transformed the selected spaces.

3.4.4 Concept maps

There are different approaches to concept maps. Originally these were developed by Joseph Novak (Novak& Gowin, 1984) as a way to understand how students learned science and also as a tool to teach science. Miles and Huberman (1994) presented a conceptual framework and several ways of developing concept maps. Maxwell (2005, p.47) explained that a concept map “consists of two things: concepts and the relationships among these. These are usually represented, respectively, as labelled circles or boxes and as arrows or lines connecting these”. The main uses of concept maps are to clarify an existing theory or to develop a theory. Maxwell (2005) distinguishes between two kinds of maps: variance maps and process maps. While variance maps deal with concepts and show how some factors influence others, process maps tell a chronological story “there is a beginning and an end, and the concepts are often specific events or situations, rather than variables” (Maxwell, 2005, p.54-55).

The researcher analysed the process in which open spaces can be improved in historic Damascus using bubble diagrams to show the actors involved in the process and the relations between them. In addition, she added a map of the space to show the effect of the process on the product and what design aspects could be affected. The researcher drew on the approach taken in Smith’s (1999) work, whose doctoral thesis looked in depth at housing and community development from households’ perspective in Costa Rica. Using such diagrams with boxes and arrows helped the researcher to visualise the complexity of the process as well as the relationships she sought to explore. More details of this method are described in 6.6.1.

3.5 Limitations of the research

This research faced several limitations. One of them was with the survey of Mediterranean cities experiences that the researcher could not undertake fieldtrips to all the cities included in the comparative survey because of financial and practical limitations. Another limitation related to the fact that this research was conducted during a period in which Syria is still experiencing a transition. Transition for Syria is multi-dimensional as the country is undergoing a comprehensive reform process. The process includes important political reform decisions as well as economic reform, which has started with administrative reform, the development of human resources and the review of existing administrative structures in the government. This led sometimes to confusion as much of the grey literature obtained by the researcher in the fieldtrips was dated before 2000 and some of the changes in administrative structure happened in 2005 and 2007. This required making a number of telephone interviews after the fieldtrips to clarify some issues, particularly for the structure of the responsible bodies and their geographic areas of responsibilities.

Another limitation that should be stated here is that the views of the users were not addressed systematically because of the constraints of time and resources. The research tried to focus on the process rather than the product to highlight the importance of institutional arrangements that affect the design and nature of public spaces. Semi-structured interviews with officers and people from governmental departments were one method to collect primary data. Most of the interviews took place in governmental departments where that the interviewee had to deal with job-related issues while answering the researcher's questions. This caused many interruptions to interviews, which often took up to three hours to be completed, although could have been done in an hour. Also access to some maps for projects was very limited as some departments restricted provision of this type of materials.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodology and methods for data collection and analysis that have been used in this research. Adopting a mixed of quantitative and qualitative research approach was determined as being the most appropriate approach to

meet the objective of the research and answer the research questions. Damascus was chosen as a general case study, and the two spaces in and outside the city walls as specific cases studies for more in-depth exploration of the product and process issues of the research. Fieldtrips and interviews were conducted in Damascus to gather documents and more details about the product and the regeneration process. The methods used to analyse the interviews, documentary evidence and case studies have also been explained in the chapter. A desktop survey of regeneration of public space in five other historic centres around the Mediterranean, including a fieldtrip to one of these, was also undertaken. The results from this latter method are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 Comparative survey of regeneration of public space in Mediterranean Cities

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 reviewed theories and issues of relevance for analysing and evaluating the public space and set out the criteria to be used throughout this research. These writers identified factors contributing to high-quality public space from a Western perspective, mainly on the basis of analysing British cities (with the exceptions of Gehl, Marcus & Francis and Jenkins & Smith). However, dealing with the case of Damascus – which is in a different geographic and cultural context and is a historic city which is confronted by the array of contemporary development challenges – requires advancing the knowledge about the context in which this research is embedded and then reconsidering the criteria that have been developed in Chapter 2.

This chapter has two objectives. The first is to test, refine and validate the criteria defined in Chapter 2 through applying them to situations which are relevant to this research, through reviewing literature about public spaces in similar contexts to Damascus in order to address research questions 1d and 4a. In doing so, this chapter reviews experiences from other similar cities in which public spaces in the historic core have been regenerated, thus addressing research question 4b. The second objective of this review is to explore the usefulness and limitations of these similar cities' experiences and how these are relevant to Damascus, thus beginning to answer research question 4c. A full answer to this question requires understanding of Damascus context, and it is therefore returned to in the concluding chapter, after Damascus case is examined in depth in chapter 5 & 6. Thus, the following questions are addressed in this chapter:

- 1d) Does the analytical framework need to be altered for specific socio-cultural/geographic contexts such as the Mediterranean area?
- 4a) What similarities are there in public space and public realm in historic city centres across Mediterranean countries?
- 4b) What has been the experience of public space regeneration processes implemented in selected cities around the Mediterranean?
- 4c) What lessons can be drawn from these experiences in relation to the governance process of public space in historic Damascus?

The information used to conduct this chapter was obtained from a variety of sources. These include literature from books and academic papers, publications of international organisations concerned with heritage issues such as UNESCO and the RehabiMed project, which forms part of Euromed Heritage, the European culture programme that came into being after the 1995 Barcelona conference¹³. Some of the materials such as brochures and reports, in particular about the Aleppo case study, were provided by the GTZ office during Damascus field work. Different sources of information have been available to prepare this chapter and this has affected the level of analysis that could be achieved for each case study city.

The researcher reviewed the literature on similar contexts which may be of relevance to Syria. This covers a range of different classifications: developing countries, Islamic cities, Middle East, and Eastern and Southern Mediterranean countries (See appendix 4.1 which describes their difference and their origin). The Eastern and Southern Mediterranean countries classification appears to be the strongest in advancing the understanding about Damascus for the purposes of this research, as these countries have experienced a significant number of different civilisations which influenced various aspects of urban life in them, and the area holds a number of interesting experiences in urban regeneration in similar urban contexts. Salama (2007) emphasised the cultural unity of Mediterranean, woven through centuries of trade and culture exchange. He identified two attitudes in the European debates on the Mediterranean: the first sees the Mediterranean as a bridge of culture and history, while the other considers the Mediterranean as a line of division or barrier, based on the old North-South conflicts which are expressed in a growing European fortress mentality driven by political purposes.

The chapter begins by discussing the definition of the Mediterranean region and its general characteristics, issues around the historic cities and their open spaces. The chapter then moves on to review the experiences of the selected cities in the regeneration of public space in their historic fabric, applying key elements from the

¹³ The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (or Barcelona Process) started in 1995 with the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean Conference. It was organised by the European Union to strengthen its relations with the countries in the *Mashriq* and *Maghreb* regions. The partnership laid the foundations for what came to be the Union for the Mediterranean.

conceptual framework developed in Chapter 2. Lastly, the chapter ends with a summary about the significance of the review and what could be drawn from it.

4.2 Definition and main characteristics of the Mediterranean region

This section is a brief review of a literature on the definition and main characteristics of the Mediterranean region in order to support the selection of case study cities for comparison with Damascus. In the literature there have been a number of attempts to define “Mediterranean” and the “Mediterranean city”. Among them, Ehlers (2001, p.239) defined the Mediterranean Sea as a fringe area at the crossroads of Africa, Asian and European cultures, which throughout history has played as a connector and as a dividing line, “depending on political constellations and situations. And it has contributed to the development of unique cultural landscapes, blends of antiquity and modernity, of Islam and Christianity, of Africa, Asia, and Europe”. In addition to being at the crossroads of three continents, it is also “a north-south fracture zone, an arena for multiple international exchanges of strategic importance” (Benoit & Comeau, 2005, p.x)¹⁴.

Indeed Benoit & Comeau (2005) give a clear definition of the Mediterranean region, noting that this can be done by considering important points (climate, vegetation, biodiversity, culture, etc.). These authors suggest four levels of definitions of the Mediterranean area (see Fig. 4.1). The first level contains the 22 countries bordering the Mediterranean; this level is defined on the basis of the institutional framework, the sectoral and economic policies and the directions of regional cooperation. The second level contains 234 coastal regions of the Mediterranean (administrative units). The third is related to the bio-climatic region and the fourth refers to catchment areas formed by river watersheds in the region (for further illustration see appendix 4.2).

Mediterranean countries have common characteristics which can be summarised as:

- Strong urbanisation, particularly along the region’s coasts. The total urban population of the countries bordering the Mediterranean increased from 94

¹⁴ Benoit & Comeau (2005) was produced by the Blue Plan within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan and backed by United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the EU, and national governments. It provides a comprehensive insight into sustainable development issues in the Mediterranean Basin and its 22 countries and territories, spanning five decades from thirty years ago to twenty years into the future.

million in 1950 to 274 million in 2000. Population in the Mediterranean urban centres is expected to reach 378 million in 2025, with the southern shore of the Mediterranean showing a high growth potential.

- Limited industrialisation, important transit zones, commerce, conquest and migration.
- Some Mediterranean cities have gone through an array of transformative forces or they have experienced difficult times suffering from natural disasters, economic disruption, ethnic division and political instability.
- A rich historic and cultural heritage which reflects an ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity (PAP and RAC, 2004; Benoit and Comeau, 2005).

Most Mediterranean cities have witnessed urban degradation because of lack of social cohesion; lack of respect for traditions; increased violence; growing social polarization; inequalities in consumption patterns and income etc. (PAP and RAC 2004). Environmental conditions are worsening with increasing demands on resources (particularly water, soil and energy) leading to degradation, increasing air pollution, degradation of ecosystems and landscapes, and loss of open spaces. Within cities, there are high housing demand and costs, poor quality housing accommodation and inadequate financing. High densities and high land values, but also limited public financial resources, render the provision of basic infrastructure problematic. Mediterranean cities are characterised by unplanned and illegal urban expansion, unstable and heterogeneous spatial patterns of land use, and lack of infrastructure and services (PAP and RAC 2004).

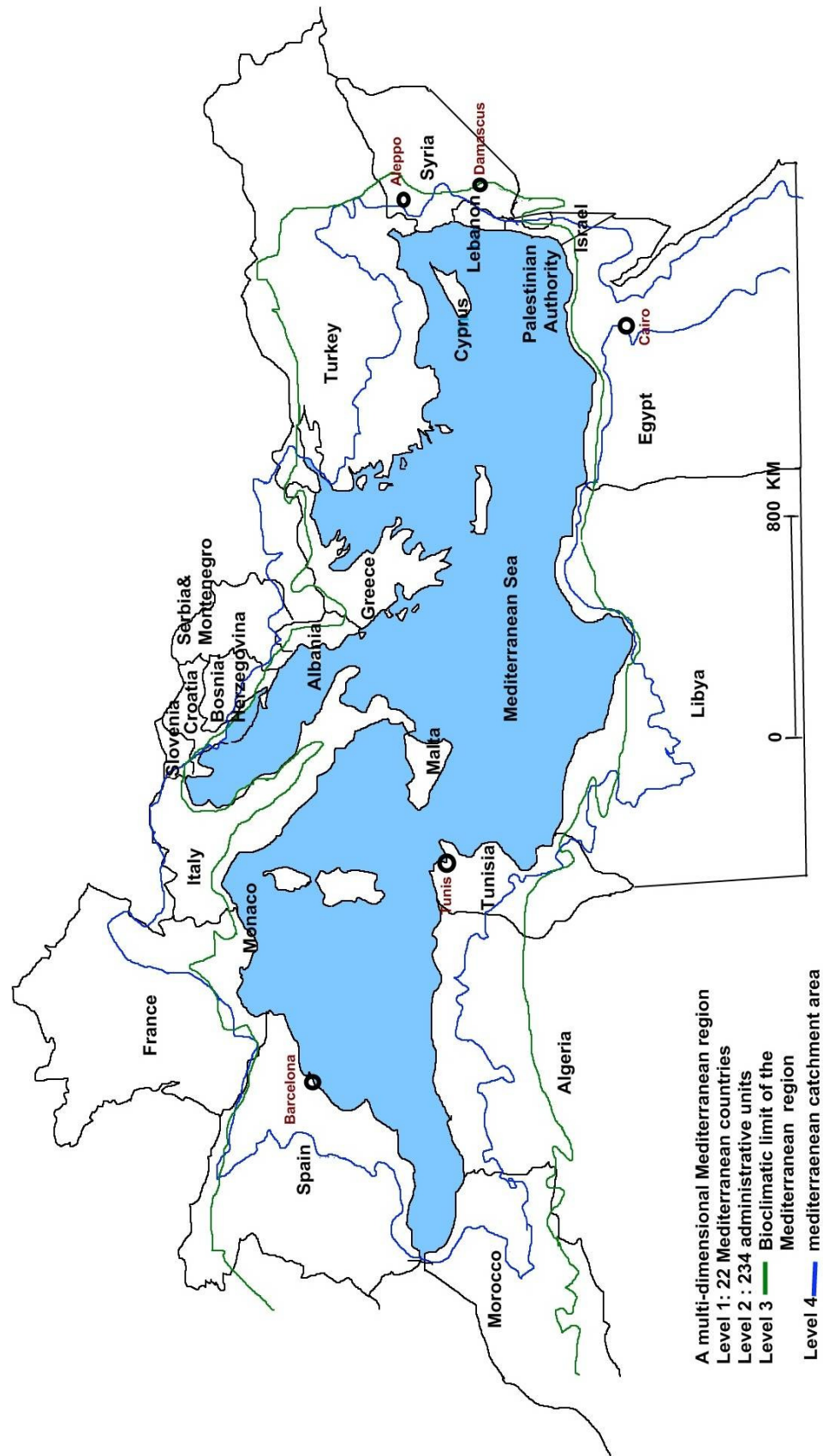


Figure 4.1.A multi-dimensional Mediterranean region.
 Source: adapter by the researcher from Benoit and Comeau (2005).

For the regeneration of open space in this research, the researcher chose the following cities to be included in the survey: Aleppo, Cairo, Tunis and Barcelona – shown on the above map. These are located in an area encompassed by the broader definition of the Mediterranean region as the 22 countries that have a coastline on this sea (see appendix 4.3). These countries have gone through similar historical circumstances of urban development and are currently tackling similar urban problems and issues. This area occupies 8.8 million km², or 5.7 per cent on the land area of the globe, and in 2000 had 427 million inhabitants, 7 per cent of the world's population. These countries can be subdivided into two groups: the North Mediterranean Countries (NMC) in Europe and the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries (SEMC) of Africa and Asia (Benoit and Comeau, 2005, p.3) (see appendix 4.4).

According to this classification, only Barcelona is from the NMC while the other cities are from SEMC. However, reasons for choosing Barcelona city have been explained in Chapter 3. In addition, Marshall (2004, p.1) explained that Barcelona has many factors in common with other Mediterranean cities such as climate, some geographical factors, certain similarities in “the switchback of governmental change and war, a gradual process of modernization, particularly during the twentieth century, surges of urbanization, especially after the 1950s”. These, probably are characteristics shared by other North Mediterranean cities as well.

4.3 The context for production of public spaces in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries (SEMC)

4.3.1 Important considerations for understanding the public space in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries (SEMC)

The importance of understanding the context being dealt with was expressed by Western authors such as Marcus and Francis (1998), who expressed their awareness of this in their work on proposing design guidelines for urban open space when they pointed out that their focus was on North American cities and lacked cross-cultural perspective. LeGates and Stout (2003) pointed out that the physical form, social structure, politics, and economics of 'non-Western' cities in the Middle East are markedly different from 'Western' cities and therefore it is important to understand the nature of non-Western cities.

The region of the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean countries contains some of the oldest cities in the world, such as Cairo, Tunis, Algiers, Aleppo and Damascus. A cursory review of the literature revealed that these cities have a historic core which took an organic form and was a product of several rules and factors: economic factors dealing with the desire to maximise equity and/or rent; environmental factors (topography and climate); cultural beliefs, social principles and values dealing with the position of women and family life in society; and rules and principles derived from *Sharia* Law (Islamic law) dealing with relationships among neighbours. This emphasis highlights the significance of religious, cultural, social and environmental values and their impacts on the principles of city planning and design. The historical focus on the above factors can be found in studies such as Jamel Akbar's analysis of the Arab-Moslem city (Akbar, 1988), AlSayyad's morphological analysis of Fatimid Cairo (AlSayyad, 1991) and Basim Hakim's analysis of the spatial morphology of Tunis (Hakim, 1986).

There are of course exceptions, studies which examine the impact of colonialism on 'traditional' societies, transformations due to national movements, and the construction of identities. These take the form of case studies, looking at specific events, buildings and so on. Celik *et al.* (1994) and AlSayyad (1992) are studies that fall within this

category. Celik *et al.* (1994) is a collection of essays exploring streets throughout the world; these include a number of Middle Eastern cities such as Cairo, Istanbul, Tripoli, and Rabat. Each case presented a single street in a particular city with unique historical conditions offering a detailed investigation to explore the urban process. In that same vein another collection of essays examined various ‘forms of dominance’ (AlSayyad, 1992). Another example is also the classic work of Abu-Lughod on Cairo tracing its development from its conception until the 1960s (Abu-Lughod, 1971).

Elsheshtawy (2004) argued that tradition, culture and heritage are important issues, but they should not be the dominant factors through which the Middle Eastern city is studied and analysed as an isolated entity from the surrounding reality, disconnected from developments happening elsewhere in the world.

Another important point when it comes to discussing planning in the Arabic city is the analysis that links the religious and secular, attempts to ascribe certain planning principles to a religion. Stewart (2001, p. 177) insists on that linking, noting that “despite disagreement over the Islamic city model, it is undeniable that Islam, as a socio-religious system, has had a significant impact on the morphology of cities where it predominates”. This leads to questioning the ‘Islamic city model’ in literature. Abu-Lughod was one of the first to criticise the ‘monolithic Islamic city model’, finding great similarities between these cities and cities in medieval Europe and arguing that similar economic factors led to specific city forms (Abu-Lughod, 1987). While Elsheshtawy (2004) considered that such a link may exist, he argues that it is not a very useful model to begin with. It leaves the reader with the impression that Moslems have been unable to go beyond the twelfth century, and that attempts at modernisation will thus ultimately lead to the destruction of their heritage, identity etc.

Moreover, the work of Stefano Bianca (2000) attempts to establish a religious basis for urban form in the Arab world. It includes four case studies: Mecca, Baghdad, Fez, and Aleppo, in which the historic structure of the so-called ‘Arab Islamic’ in cities is examined, thus setting the stage for what is termed a conflict between ‘traditional Islamic concepts’ and ‘modern Western planning principles’. Some argued that where religion is far more traditional in its practice, the defence of religion also conflicts with the acceptance of modernisation (Rubin, 2003).

Elsheshtawy (2004) argued that the mere existence of such a historic model is never questioned – it is assumed that it is there and any subsequent examination of contemporary case studies is done in relation to this assertion, with all the conclusions that follow. He went on to say that urban projects are evaluated and criticised based on the extent to which they deviate from, are an approximation of, and merge with, this historic model. Elsheshtawy (2004) argued that a model that examines contemporary social, political and economic factors operating at a global level and to understand the extent to which they have shaped the Middle Eastern cities would be much more useful. An example of that is the work of Celik (1997) on Algiers's development and the extent to which it was guided by colonial policies.

It is noted, particularly in the more recent literature, that attention is gradually moving away from the 'Islamic' model in which the region's urban history was studied under one paradigmatic umbrella. There are increasing calls for examining the impact of capitalism, socialism, and the recent global economic paradigm and the free flow of goods, people and ideas are the possibilities that Elsheshtawy proposed. Salama (2007) also highlighted the globalisation paradigm and how its potential was never realised since some voices put more emphasis on local problems – exemplified by economic hardship and poverty and political instability, which were stronger an influence than the idea of a global world. Shechter and Yacobi (2005b) called for a work that integrates political economy with the study of urban development and city life. Planning should permit a wider discussion on contemporary urban realities stemming from internal and external (globalisation) conditions, and raising serious questions about local versus universal, authentic versus imported, and new versus old (Shechter and Yacobi, 2005b, p.513).

In conclusion, religion, tradition, culture and heritage are very important factors when it comes to investigating planning issues in the SEMC, however, the researcher agrees with Elsheshtawy that understanding the current social, economic and political factors operating within a global level – as impacting on the local – will provide a deeper understanding of urban development. This approach permits wider analysis of underlying forces (whether political, economic, social or cultural) to be examined across global and local value systems and clarify appropriate criteria for evaluation of urban public realm as both process and product.

4.3.2 Public realm and public spaces in the cities of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries (SEMC)

This section highlights the morphology and function of the historic fabric and its changes in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean cities (SEMC), with a focus on public realm and public space. There is no room here to describe all the historical events for each city, nor are they relevant to address the main concerns of this chapter. This section limits itself to providing an overview of key events or issues. This summary aims to clarify the larger historical context, and offer a background against which to measure the significance of these events or issues for the public space in the historic fabric.

Ehlers (2001, p.243) defined 4 form points and 4 function points common to Mediterranean cities. The form points are: preservation of the Roman grid-patterns; a cathedral or mosque on the site of a Roman temple; ethnic quarters with neighbourhoods of irregularly shaped alleys and cul-de-sacs; juxtaposition of traditional urban forms in the medina and western surroundings in the 'villes nouvelles and faubourgs'. The function points are: a relative lack of industry; domination of a rural agricultural hinterland; gateway status for labour migration and tourism and aristocratic residential status.

Atash (1993) noted that the layout of the medieval Islamic city consists of city centre, residential quarter, major roads, minor road, city gates and city wall. The overall urban fabric of older cities in the Middle East and North Africa is composed of several fragments: the historic core, the colonial quarters, urban developments in the post-colonial era, and the outlying squatter settlements (see Figs 4.2 and 4.3).

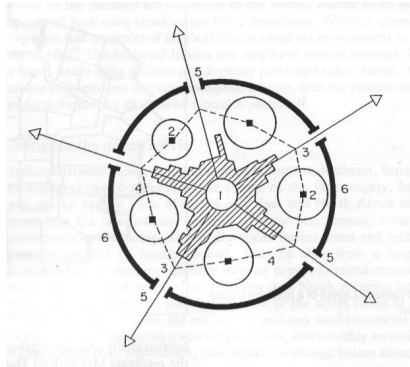


Figure 4.2 Layout of a medieval Islamic city.

- 1. city centre;
- 2. residential quarter;
- 3. major road;
- 4. minor road;
- 5. city gate;
- 6. city wall.

Source: Atash (1993, p.).

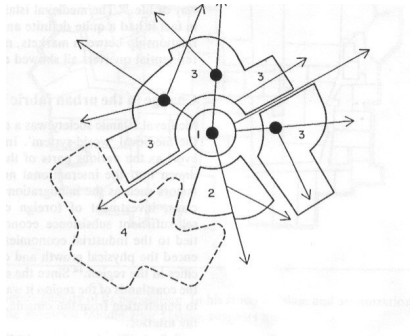


Figure 4.3 Existing urban fabric of an older city in the Middle East or North Africa.

- 1. Historic core.
- 2. colonial quarter;
- 3. new urban development;
- 4. Squatter settlement.

Source: Atash (1993).

Most of the SEMC have a unique heritage and have experienced two types of the layout of the public spaces. The first one is the ‘traditional’ layout which is found in the historic core of these cities. And the second is the modern layout that spreads outside the historic core. Better understanding of what is happening may, however, be gained from looking further back in time. By the end of the 18th century, most of the ESMC cities were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire and had consolidated historic cores, the layout of which took the organic form. When modernity started to affect the region by the 18th century, the ESMC witnessed many urban changes, among them the new ‘modern’ built environment appeared beside the old ‘traditional’ layout. A considerable body of literature focuses on analysing the ‘traditional’ layout, by both Western and

non-Western scholars (Davis, 2006; Stewart, 2001; Kijima, 1989; Al- Rihawi, 1970; Kheir, 1969).

Briefly, the traditional layout has an organic, tightly-knit urban fabric contained within the wall, which has many gates. This urban fabric has well defined architectural parts: religious buildings, commercial markets, military building (Citadel) and single-storey residential quarters. There were major axes representing main thoroughfares that connected the city centre with the surrounding hinterland through the city gates. The roads were characterised by hierarchy, with weaving narrow and dead-end streets that branched off from the main axes and connected the residential quarters with one another and with the rest of the city fabric.

Each residential district, being a small neighbourhood, contained its own mosque, small local market, and public bath. It had its own religious and civic leaders and administrative organisations. While Atash (1993) described that this specific feature of the Middle Eastern city reveals a high degree of cultural identity, continuity and unity, Weber has a different view. Weber considered this feature a fragmentation of the urban fabric, which reveals that the city functions through sub-communities rather than acting as socially unified settlements, and moreover that it revealed the lack of autonomous associations (Weber, 1968, cited in Daunton, 1989¹⁵; Atash, 1993). According to Davis (2006) the organic fabric of the traditional Islamic city has a deep order, which lies in the relations between the private and public realms. This order followed a system of regulation which operated at the very local level and not through central government. Bianca (1981) argued that the organic fabric is not only a spatial expression but also a tightly woven social network, which means that it is a product of the individual users and of the various social groups of the space.

This urban fabric was characterised by separation between private and public spaces, between dwelling and workplace. This separation was meant to provide maximum privacy for individual houses and their inhabitants. The private space (courtyard houses) were connected to public life (main roads) through a network which manifested a hierarchical nature of urban space from private, semi-private, semi-public and public streets. Bianca (1981) discussed the sense of space in the Islamic city and noted that

¹⁵ For general discussion, see Turner (1976) *Weber and Islam: a critical study*. London.

space was separated from the flows of movements and carefully articulated to serve the privacy and the private life.

The modern layout, on the other hand, is manifested through wide streets and linkage axes meeting in focal points and forming the concept of the square; the construction of tenement buildings (3-4 floors) with commercial activities on the ground floor; detached buildings such as villas; tall buildings (5 or more floors); and construction of some governmental buildings. The spread of commercial activities on the ground floor and the conversion of residential houses into commercial use affects the hierarchical nature of urban space, losing the intermediate degrees of 'publicness' which existed in the traditional city. This important change in the nature of public spaces in the historic fabric is analysed further in the case of Damascus in Chapter 5.

The issue of **dualist** morphology is evident in literature about the specific cities chosen for the survey. For example, in a description of Aleppo in 1930, Bianca (1984) noted that the city contains the old city inside the wall, neighbourhoods developed in *Mamluk* times and a small colonial city built at the beginning of the 20th century:

“they evidence a dualism, torn between the so-called European modern city and the old city, rich with the heritage of monuments and national architecture (Aleppo, Cairo and Tunis) but where large populations inhabit dilapidated and unhealthy dwellings”(PAP and RAC 2004, p.1-2).

Also Akrouit-Yaiche (2002, p. 247) described the historical core of Tunis as consisting of a *medina*, “the traditional Arab-Muslim model” and a European city alongside the medina. In the imperial period of Cairo, Stewart (1999, p.135) explained that the city became divided into two realms “which can be depicted as either east/west or traditional/modern, each defined in stark contrast to the other”.

Although Algiers is not included in the survey, Celik's (1997) analysis of Algiers' city planning confirms the dual structure of the Mediterranean city. Her analysis was based on what she calls "the trial-and-error" model of French colonial urbanism, including the fragmentation of the *casbah*¹⁶, ambitious Beaux Arts schemes to create European forms

¹⁶ The Casbah (French) or as transliterated from Arabic Qasba is specifically the citadel of Algiers and the traditional quarter clustered round it. More generally, *kasbah* denotes the walled citadel of many North African cities and towns.

of housing, master plans inspired by high modernism, and comprehensive regional plans. Moreover, in her forthcoming book¹⁷, Celik investigates the 19th century public spaces in former French colonies in North Africa and Ottoman provinces in the Middle East – a new type of production of public spaces influenced by the European-style avenues, streets, squares, parks and public buildings – which brought significant transformations to cities ranging from Damascus to Algiers, and to the lives of the citizens throughout. Again, it is seen that the new layout of the built environment emerged beside the traditional layout of the existing cities.

During the 20th century, the historic fabric of these cities experienced social changes, and economic shifts led to changes in political life, social structure and economic activities. As a result, the historic fabric witnessed changes in building typology and layout, exemplified by free standing buildings, new markets, formation of squares, accommodating the automobile and the construction of wide streets.

These changes in the ‘product’ continued during the second half of the 20th century and intensified with interventions which led to more conflicts when confronted with the structure of the historic fabric. Bianca (1984, p.21-22) summarised five conflicts as “the absolute primacy given to vehicular traffic; interventions that are not adapted to the typology of the historic fabric; incompatible scale; the abrupt pace of change and the gap which usually exists between planning concepts and actual practice”.

Another issue is the **social segregation** or **modification** phenomenon which is noted in all the selected cities, with different circumstances in Barcelona. This happened when the historic cores- medina- experienced some changes, which resulted in transformation of their urban aspects, such as demographic shifts, household size, changes in economic activities and emergence of new social groups, etc. In **Aleppo** this happened after the French Mandate (1920-1947), when many middle-and upper-class old city residents left their houses to reside in the colonial expansion areas, believed to provide more modern conditions. Their houses were abandoned, rented out to low-income families, subdivided into smaller units and sold or occupied by migrants from rural areas (residential density became as high as 900 p/ha), which contributed to accelerate the process of decay (Vincent and Sergie 2005).

¹⁷ Celik’s book in progress, at the time of writing this thesis, is titled *Public Space, Modernity, and Empire Building: Ottoman Syria and Lebanon, French Maghrib (1830-1914)*.

In **Tunis**, at the time of independence in 1956, the Medina experienced this phenomenon through the move of the upper-and middle-class from the medina and the occupation of their houses by the migrants from the countryside; high density (550 p/ha) leading to subdivision of the traditional houses; increase in the household size from single-family to several families; severe overcrowding; and high rates of tenancy. All of these have contributed to the rapid deterioration of the city's traditional fabric associated with the lack of maintenance and poor state of repair. In addition, some trades and crafts have weakened and others have continued by finding new markets among tourists (Kenzari, 2004).

Against these changes, **Barcelona** has a different experience in terms of urban planning and change. Two types of layout can be found in Barcelona: the historic centre of Barcelona and the expansion or 'Eixample' outside the historic centre. The historic centre (200ha) contains the old Roman city (11ha) and looks like the organic layout. However, its alleys and streets are more regular than the ones found in the traditional Arab cities. The housing takes the dominant form of apartment blocks which are higher in height and more open to street than the Arab traditional courtyard houses because their facades have windows and balconies. In addition these blocks are not interlocked and open spaces like squares and plazas exist, so the layout is more permeable.



Figure 4.4 Aerial view of a traditional Arab urban fabric and of a European historic centre.
Source: www.rehabimed.net.

In the mid 19th century, the old city wall was torn down by permission from the central government of Madrid. The expanded area outside the old city - 'Eixample' - was the product of modern town planning which presented the talents of many local modernist architects (Calavita and Ferrer, 2004). The plan for city expansion was prepared by the engineer Ildefons Cerda (1863) – a pioneering work in modern urban planning – and

came as a response to improve the living conditions in the walled city. “The layout consisted of a system of street blocks situated between axes of 113.3 meters with 20-meter wide streets. Their guidelines corresponded to the dominant lines of the plain and were oriented at 45 from the north, repeating the Roman layout” (Busquets 2005, p.130). So the expansion city came as a response to the local need with an intention towards less density and wider streets than in the old core of the city, and moreover this plan was prepared by local rather than foreign people.

On other hand, the changes and transformation of Barcelona’s historical centre – Ciutat Vella – reflect a different discourse. Magrinyà (2005, p.282) argued that this historic core is confronted with “a process of change marked by the confluences of multiple wills that reflect the images represented by each of the social groups in the city. The historical memory, the conquest of a new space to be designed, the idyllic image of the mixing of people and the concentration of immigration are some of the most significant components in this confluence of projections”. He explained that the gentrification discourse started as early as 1835 and corresponded to three periods during which Barcelona was transformed¹⁸.

Therefore the selected cities have a historic core and several expansion areas, each with its own morphology. The historic cores have been subject to several changes during the second half of the 20th century, which have led to modifying them physically, socially and culturally. The historic centres in the selected cities have been subject to the social and physical confluence of deterioration in different degrees and combinations, but always involving, among other issues, a general problem which this research is focusing on: the deterioration of the physical conditions of their open spaces and the lack of redefinition of their role when they have been upgraded. This problem was emphasised

¹⁸ An analysis of the interventions on the historical centre of Barcelona provided by Magrinya (2005, p.282-283) showed that there were three stages:

- The Mercantile Stage associated to the Mendizabal disentailment (1835), recognisable in the markets (Boqueria, Santa Caterina) and squares (Medinaceli, Real, Sant Jaume);
- The Industrial Stage coinciding with the second industrial revolution that was associated with the introduction of electricity and confirmed with the opening of the Via Laietana (1907);
- The Culturalist Stage associated with the postmodern era, with the introduction of the new post Fordian production relations, and centred on new cultural artefacts and the relocation of existing entities (Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona, the Centre for Contemporary Culture in Barcelona, Foment de les Arts Decoratives, Edicions 62, Institut d'Estudis Catalans, etc).

in the outputs of the RehabiMed project¹⁹ (2004-08), which developed tools to improve open spaces.

Aleppo, Tunis and Cairo present a range of cases showing how open space became an issue when the old fabric and the new met during the spread of modernity and modernisation of urban form through urban expansion and later gentrification. The changes associated with the gentrification phenomenon affected the nature of open spaces. So, for example, local people moved out from their houses in the old fabric to live in new 'modern' houses and renting their old houses to several families, and conversion of residential houses to accommodate commercial activities led, in the first instance, to changes in the nature of open space in the traditional fabric and to rapid physical decay. This happened in Aleppo, Cairo, Tunis as well as Damascus, which will be further analysed in chapter 5.

Bianca (1984, 21) examined the relationship between block development and the cellular structure of the historic fabric, concluding that problems:

“crop up at the border between old and new that remain unresolved, leaving open scars in the structure of the old city which eventually provoke further destruction. This mutual rejection by two incompatible types of tissue makes transplantation of new elements extremely difficult or impossible to accomplish”.

Another issue which contributes to the problem of open space outside the old city is the undefined concept of the buffer zone, which was one of the subjects in a symposium on “*The World Heritage Convention and the Buffer Zone*” organised by the International Scientific Committee on Legal, Administrative and Financial Issues (ICLAFI)²⁰. The symposium discussed how the listing of the historic cities focused on the core area and the original operational guidelines (1977) for the World Heritage Convention (1972) did not focus on the broader surroundings of the World Heritage site at all, which left these areas open to more complex confrontations. Later development of the concept of the buffer zone is summarised in ICLAFI (2006, p.183):

¹⁹ RehabiMed is one of the four projects of Euromed Heritage III which started in 2004/05 and finished in 2007/08.

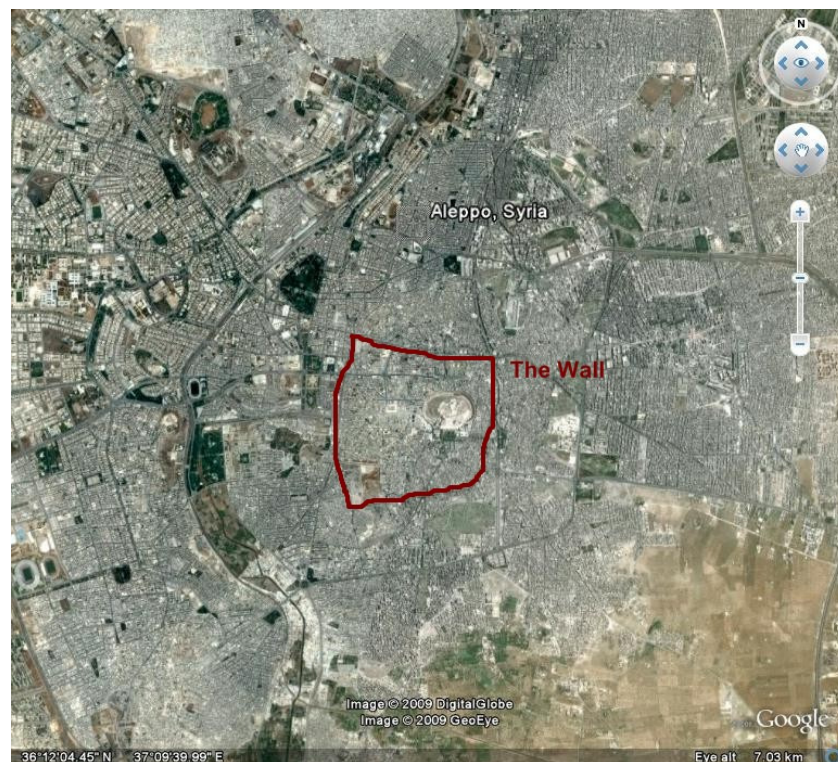
²⁰ The Symposium “*The World Heritage Convention and the Buffer Zone*” was organized by ICOMOS Japan and the Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), in cooperation with Kyushu University as one of the 2006 Programmes for Professionals in the Fields of UNESCO's Competence within the framework of the ACCU International Exchange Programme under the UNESCO/Japan Funds-in-Trust for the Promotion of International Cooperation and Mutual Understanding.

“It is only since the revision of the operational guidelines in 1980 that the protection of the broader surroundings was inscribed under the concept of the buffer zone. It was recognized that the universal value of a Cultural Heritage site could be jeopardized by alterations in its broader surroundings. Notwithstanding this formal recognition, many aspects remained unclear. Many problematic cases involving changes occurring within the buffer zone emerged. The revision of the operational guidelines in 2005 aimed partially at responding to the problems of the concept of the buffer zone. The inclusion of a definition and some requirements for its application could be seen as a major improvement”.

The problem of open space is also central to what can be observed also in **Barcelona**. Pol (2007) argued that the degradation of open spaces is evident in most Spanish cities. Particularly in the ‘60s and ‘70s this was due to “the exaggerated predominance of the car in all aspects of urban life, from the ideological references of supposed ‘modernization’ to everyday preferences; from planning to works, involving, both in centres of the great cities and the smallest historic sites, the mean-spirited squeezing of the spaces dedicated to pedestrians and the disproportionate growth of space for traffic and parking” (Pol, 2007, p.303).

The above literature review suggests an approach to the study of public realm and public space which emphasises a historic, morphological perspective which focuses on tradition, culture and heritage. Such approaches add greatly to knowledge, but the question is do they provide sufficient explanation for the changes that happen in public spaces and public realm? It is also noted that all the selected cities have experienced problems in the open spaces in their historic fabric, through their physical deterioration and/or conceptual redefinition.

In the following subsection, focuses on a review of the changes that have affected the public spaces and public realm in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries.



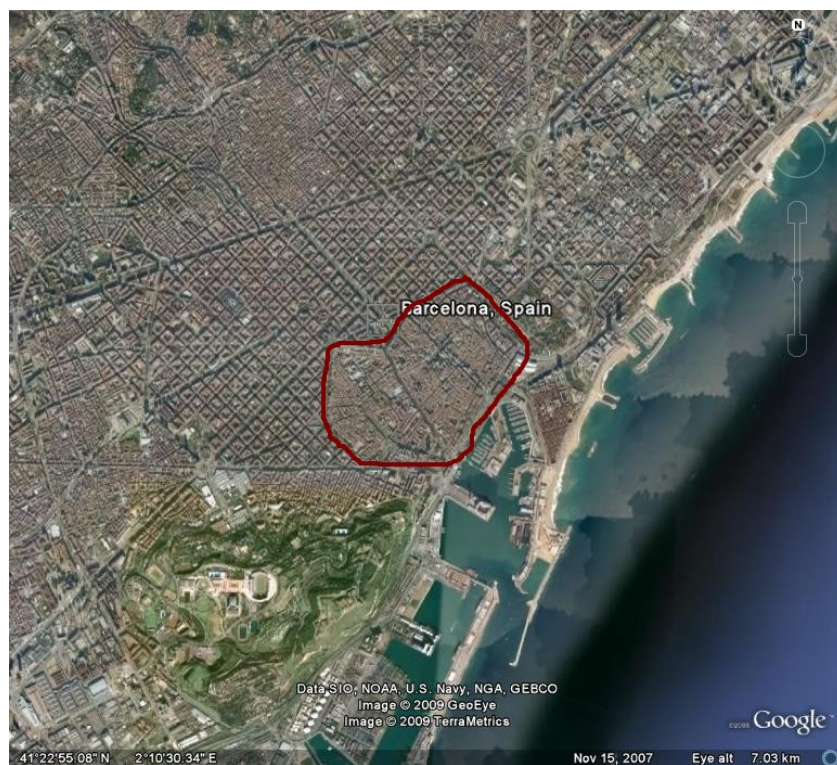


Figure 4.5 The historic cores within the selected Mediterranean cities: Aleppo, Cairo, Tunis and Barcelona respectively.
Source: www.googleearthmap.com.

4.3.3 Processes of change in the public realm in the cities of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries (SEMC)

Colonisation, political economic as well as socio-economic pressures and globalisation are three main forces at the regional level that have affected the urban fabric with its public realm and public spaces in the cities of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries (Atash, 1993; Celik, 1997; Hasan, 1998; Bianca, 2000; Elsheshtawy, 2004).

Colonisation brought a dualism in the urban fabric by developing colonial or European quarters (residential and commercial) outside the walls of the medieval Islamic city (Atash, 1993; Hamadeh, 1992). Where these new quarters were not built alongside the old city, the colonial powers restructured the old Islamic city or even destroyed parts of it to accommodate their own needs for new roads, squares, and public buildings. For some of the cities in the region, the colonial period marked the beginning of the decline of their historic core, the elimination of its political and economic importance and social divisions between the indigenous population and the European residents. The indigenous residents were largely confined to the old city while the colonial civil servants and merchants lived in the European quarters. Because plans for the European quarters often did not take into account the necessary development of the old city and urban expenditures for municipal improvements and public services were often allocated mostly to the European quarters, a growing socio-economic gap emerged between the native and foreign residents.

Celik (1997) and Bianca (2000) provided an explanation of the urban change caused by the colonisation in general. Celik 1997 gave an overview of the evolution of modern urbanism in France and its impact on colonial cities. For Celik (1997, p.2) the French colonial city is characterised by a powerful visual character that culminated in the construction of images of the European and indigenous quarters. Bianca described the possible range of urban interventions taken by colonial powers to set out their 'new towns'. In general, Bianca (2000) identifies three types of planning policy intervention in historic Muslim cities. One way of intervening depended on erecting new cities on new lands without going into how to deal with the pre-existing historic urban fabric. Another way depended on inserting new sites with wide roads and high buildings into the old historic fabric. This extreme has produced many empty spaces in an abandoned situation which appear as open cuts in the historic urban fabric and which are therefore not able to

interact sufficiently within the whole city, especially with the city centre. An alternative between these two extremes combined elements of new settlement and interventions in the existing fabric, which is the case of Damascus.

While some may argue that these interventions under colonisation led to the underdevelopment of the city, Elsheshtawy (2004, p.4) claimed that colonisation may not be the sole factor responsible for that, and moreover he went further to argue that “while Arab cities were subject to colonialism, they nevertheless were able to grow, develop and contribute to architecture/urban design to an extent that has not been examined thoroughly in the literature”.

In the post colonial era, factors such as government urban policies associated with rapid population and urban growth further changed the urban fabric of the cities of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. Hasan (1998) gave an explanation about the problem of the built environment in general in developing countries. He argued that most of these countries became independent after World War II and adopted welfare state or socialist models on which to base the development of their own societies. These models, drawn from European and Soviet experience, were intended to provide for the physical and social needs of the urban centres.

These models failed to deliver because they were not compatible with the political, social, economic, demographic and cultural realities of the societies to which they were applied. The results of this application are the deterioration of the built environment, where *ad hoc* has replaced policy, helplessness has led to corruption, formal sector planning cannot reach the poor, who increasingly depend on an informal sector for the fulfilment of their needs, and the numerous innovative projects (often funded by donor agencies) have failed to be transformed into effective national programmes (Hasan, 1998).

Cities of SEMC grew rapidly and many populations of Islamic cities have tripled in the last five decades as a result of rural-to-urban migration, drawn by new job opportunities and proximity to services. As a result, the demand for transport, wholesaling, retailing, cargo handling and related facilities has multiplied proportionately. However, most of these cities have only catered for the needs of residential, retailing and formal industrial requirements, facing such weighty challenges of a swelling number of urbanites, the

other requirements have developed informally (not in regulatory way), often in the old city centres that constitute the historic urban fabric. Much of the economy of the cities is also of an informal nature, unattended to by planners, and this too has developed in the inner cities (Hasan, 1998).

While the literature is filled with work examining the colonial impact and socio-economic pressures on urban spatial structure of Middle Eastern cities, very little work appears to study the influences of contemporary global trends. One among the few is the ethnographic study undertaken by Christa Salamandra (2004) about urban life of Damascus. She argues that in contemporary urban Syria, debates about the representation, preservation, and restoration of the Old City of Damascus have become part of status competition and identity construction among the city's elite. In theme restaurants and nightclubs that play on images of Syrian tradition, in television programs, nostalgic literature, and visual art, and in the rhetoric of historic preservation groups, the idea of the Old City has become a commodity for the consumption of tourists and, most important, of new and old segments of the Syrian upper class. In deploying and debating such representations, Syrians dispute the past and criticise the present.

Another work which discusses the influence of contemporary global trends – mainly globalisation – is that of Elsheshtawy (2004), who argues that globalisation has become, within the last few years, a catch phrase usually linked to the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, mentioned in a negative context. In urban design it is typically associated with a loss of place, identity, and character. How does the Eastern and southern Mediterranean city relate to these issues? The answer given by Elsheshtawy (2004) for the Middle Eastern city can be applied also in the case of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean city, and it is that no city operates in a vacuum but relates to such issues in a strong manner. Some cities could respond enthusiastically while in others the attempt to join this ‘international party’ remains elusive.

Strategies, at the urban and architectural level, were developed in the colonial period to cope with this context. For example, attempts were made to wipe out the past and join the so-called ‘civilised’ West. Yet it is interesting to note that these changes at the turn of the 20th century occurred within an overall climate of ‘modernity’ in which history was abandoned in favour of ‘embracing’ a new age. These developments had a

significant impact on the spatial structure of many cities in the region – for example cutting wide thoroughfares through the dense urban fabric of historic quarters and superimposing spacious plazas, as the research shows, especially in ‘traditional’ centres such as in Algiers, Tunis, Cairo and Damascus (Elsheshtawy, 2004). But what about contemporary conditions? Many would argue that there are strong similarities to the political climate present today, with ‘colonisation’ having been replaced by ‘globalisation’ (Elsheshtawy, 2004).

From a research point of view, generally, the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean city has strong potential for examining these issues for a variety of reasons. Many have been subjected to colonialism in the 18th and 19th centuries, which in many respects are very similar to contemporary conditions in terms of the political reality (Western hegemony) as well as economic conditions (global capitalism). In the post colonial period, though the official colonialism ended, SEMC have kept operating under another form of colonialism through modernisation and globalisation. Modernisation in society, its education and administrative structures, in major governmental policies and development strategies, is largely derived from western models and rules. Modernisation entailed a set of beliefs and behaviours that challenge traditional society, while globalisation involves the flow of goods, people and information: “similar to contemporary advances in information technology and global communications, technological and artistic advances at the beginning of the twentieth century revolutionised people’s sense of space and movement which was reflected in a ‘new architecture’ and ‘urbanism’” (Elsheshtawy, 2004, p.9). So how have the SEMC responded to such trends? In Rubin’s (2003) view, the city of the Middle East is anti-globalisation and no area in the world is resisting globalisation to an extent that equals this, while Elsheshtawy’s (2004) criticised Rubin’s view for being ‘orientalist’, which assumed that ‘Islamic’ cities have been unable to develop, grow and in turn to modernise. Ultimately, these cities are not anti-globalisation, as they accept ‘globalisation vocabularies’, but with problems because these ‘vocabularies’ are different to local systems and values and sometimes they are perceived as destroying the local society. Moreover, these cities are slow and/or still struggling to adapt them to their locality in contemporary times.

In the following section, a review of the experiences in the regeneration of public spaces in the case study cities is provided, after a general introduction reviewing different approaches to upgrading public space in the historic core of cities in the region.

4.4 The regeneration process in the Mediterranean cities

4.4.1 Introduction

It was noted above that there is a considerable body of literature which puts a great emphasis on the importance of public spaces and public realm as a product and as the result of a process from historical and morphological perspectives, and which discusses tradition, heritage and culture. On the other hand, there is a scarcity of current published research on public spaces and public realm in SEMC, particularly the analysis of public space as the result of a process involving actors and relations between them. This was recognised by Stewart (1999) who argued for a political economy analysis of Cairo's urban form, as a way of addressing the lack of knowledge within the general context of lesser developed countries where information on actors is limited and the state dominates.

Among scholars who emphasised the significance of history and culture when they approached their PhD research are Abdel-Salam (1994) and Nooraddin (1998). Abdel-Salam (1994) investigated the quality of public open spaces in the city centre of Alexandria, Egypt. He identified the cultural determinants which affect the perception of quality by groups of people involved as actors in the processes of production, consumption and control of the built environment. He advanced his knowledge about the cultural determinants through reviewing mainly Western literature. However, he assessed the quality of public spaces depending on actors' perceptions of urban quality, and finally he developed appropriate cultural guidelines to improve public spaces. Nooraddin (1998) explored the concept of "*al-fina*," a term meaning spaciousness and the inner courtyard and/or yard in front of or around buildings. She argued that history is required to explain the historical roots of this in-between phenomenon and to illustrate the role of "*al-fina*" in medieval Cairo as well as its manifestation in the modern city.

In regard to understanding the process from an institutional perspective, the work of Benoit and Comeau (2005) provides a picture of urban governance in SEMC. These authors noted that in terms of urban development in the SEMC, cities share similar characteristics in their urban governance and the changes they have undergone “The distinctive features that have characterised public institutions in the Mediterranean countries for the past 40 years are highlighted as: a heavily centralised administrative, economic and political power; and a top-down administration pattern, which is hierarchic and often with little flexibility” (Benoit and Comeau, 2004, p.231).

The authors explain that because these institutions in cities of the SEMC were set up after national independence, they often predominantly apply a centralising logic in order to ensure national unity and stability of the nation-state and its administrative bodies. However, for nearly 20 years, the way of governing has been undergoing significant changes because of the effect of widespread economic liberalisation and concerns about decentralised participation. These changes include:

- “the boundaries of public action have become less clear and the intervention levels are increasingly numerous and entangled: trans-national, national, sub-national;
- the number of actors involved has multiplied: community groups, non-governmental organizations and the private sector have a growing, and increasingly sought-after, role in the choices and decisions made by the public authorities;
- the way in which these different actors interact has also changed, becoming less hierarchical, more transverse and more flexible than before” (Benoit and Comeau, 2005, p.231).

Since 2005, international organisations and agencies concerned with sustainable places, heritage and historic fabric – such as United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)/ Historic Cities Support Programme (HCP) and EuroMed Heritage/ Rehabimed – have made a vital contribution to upgrading and maintaining sustainable historic sites. These organisations have worked in SEMC, publishing their approaches towards upgrading the historic fabric in the cities of SEMC and/or discussing the possible concepts of urban governance. By reviewing these approaches here, the researcher attempts not so much to

define the roles of the actors as to highlight the aspects of the process which should be examined. Understanding these approaches can also offer the possibility of examining the applicability of Western approaches to governance.

In May 2005, an international conference, *World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture – Managing the Historic Urban Landscape*, was held under the patronage of UNESCO in Vienna, Austria. It emphasised the importance of sensitivity to cultural-historic contexts for urban development. Furthermore, it argued that appropriate and sufficient action involves examining the spatial context between old and new, while respecting the authenticity and integrity of historic fabric and building stock. In brief and most importantly, a deep understanding of the culture, history and architecture of place is one of the crucial guidelines for urban interventions and contemporary architecture in a historic urban landscape.

In terms of the product, the conference insisted that:

“Preservation of World Heritage site also involves the design of public space: particular attention is to be paid to functionality, scale, materials, lighting, street furniture, advertising, and vegetation, to name a few. Urban planning infrastructure in heritage zones must include all measures to respect the historic fabric, building stock and context, and to mitigate the negative effects of traffic circulation and parking” (UNESCO, 2005a, Para. 24).

Moreover, in paragraphs 27 and 28, which explain the means and ways to manage the World Heritage historic urban landscapes, the conference emphasised the need for a precise knowledge of the territory and its elements of heritage significance, identified through scientific methods of inventory, the relevant laws, regulations, tools and procedures, which are formalised in a Management Plan, according to the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. The development and implementation of a Management Plan for historic urban landscapes requires the participation of an interdisciplinary team of experts and professionals, as well as timely initiation of comprehensive public consultation.

This current concept of urban conservation provided by the UNESCO (2005b) guidelines emphasises *a partnership approach*. Thus States which have signed the Convention are: “encouraged to ensure the participation of a wide variety of

stakeholders, including site managers, local and regional governments, local communities, NGOs, and other interested parties and partners in the identification, nomination and protection of World Heritage properties” (UNESCO, 2005b, Para. 12).

Therefore, it is noted from a review of the UNESCO approach towards upgrading the historic fabric, that this emphasises the role of the state in ensuring stakeholder consultations, the existence of an interdisciplinary team and the knowledge of the relevant laws, regulations, tools and procedures. In terms of upgrading public spaces, careful attention has been given to urban form, function, movement and landscape issues.

The Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme (HCP), through work in some historic cities in SEMC, has over time developed and defined an Integrated Area Development (IAD) concept as a basic conceptual framework which is a reference for revitalising historic cities. This concept emphasises participation of different actors – particularly the local authority and community – and collaboration between them. For enhancement of public open spaces, the HCP recommends multi-functional use, social interaction, decreasing levels of solid waste in open space, beautification of open space and increasing the distribution and the size of new green plots for improving living conditions in the neighbourhood.

The approach taken by AKTC is to sign formal Public-Private Partnership agreements with the relevant authorities. Once the positive change induced by such partnerships becomes more visible, local private sector investments may also be attracted to participate in such joint ventures, particularly if AKTC can offer planning assistance to identify, shape and frame potential projects. The most important point for the success of an IAD Project, apart from governmental support, is the close collaboration with the local communities and their representatives:

“In the initial phase, through assessment of local needs, opportunities and implementation procedures need to be made to accurately represent the realities in the field. Having stressed the importance of local participation, back-up from governmental partners is equally essential in terms of coordinating urban planning policies and phasing investments, particularly in the field of infrastructure and public facilities” (AKTC *et al.*, 2007, p.9).

Another important approach reviewed here is the RehabiMed method (2007) for rehabilitation of traditional Mediterranean architecture. The method adopts five basic principles in order to guarantee the success of the rehabilitation/revitalisation process: integration (versus isolation); globalism (versus specialisation); coordination (sharing versus selfishness); flexibility (versus rigidity); adaptability (versus univocal attitude). The method is divided into five phases of action: political backing; diagnosis; strategy; action and monitoring. Within these phases eight key stages can be identified: political will; preliminary decisions; an analysis of the territory; integrated diagnosis; strategic reflection; action plan; the actions and continual evaluation.

The focus here is on the definition of the framework of urban governance and participation which is provided by the RehabiMed method. This identifies the different actors involved in the process as follows:

- Public authorities as representatives of the citizens as a whole have the role to promote the process, guarantee the involvement of different society actors and back the different phases of the process.
- The teams of experts made up of administration's or external technical professionals (architects, planners, engineers, sociologists, economists, lawyers, geographers, etc.) will be closely related to public authorities and share its projects with social agents and citizens.
- The body of social agents includes private companies, societies and civil associations, NGOs, public and private education and cultural institutions, etc.
- The residents and users who have an important role to play in the entire process and who ought to be the first concerned.

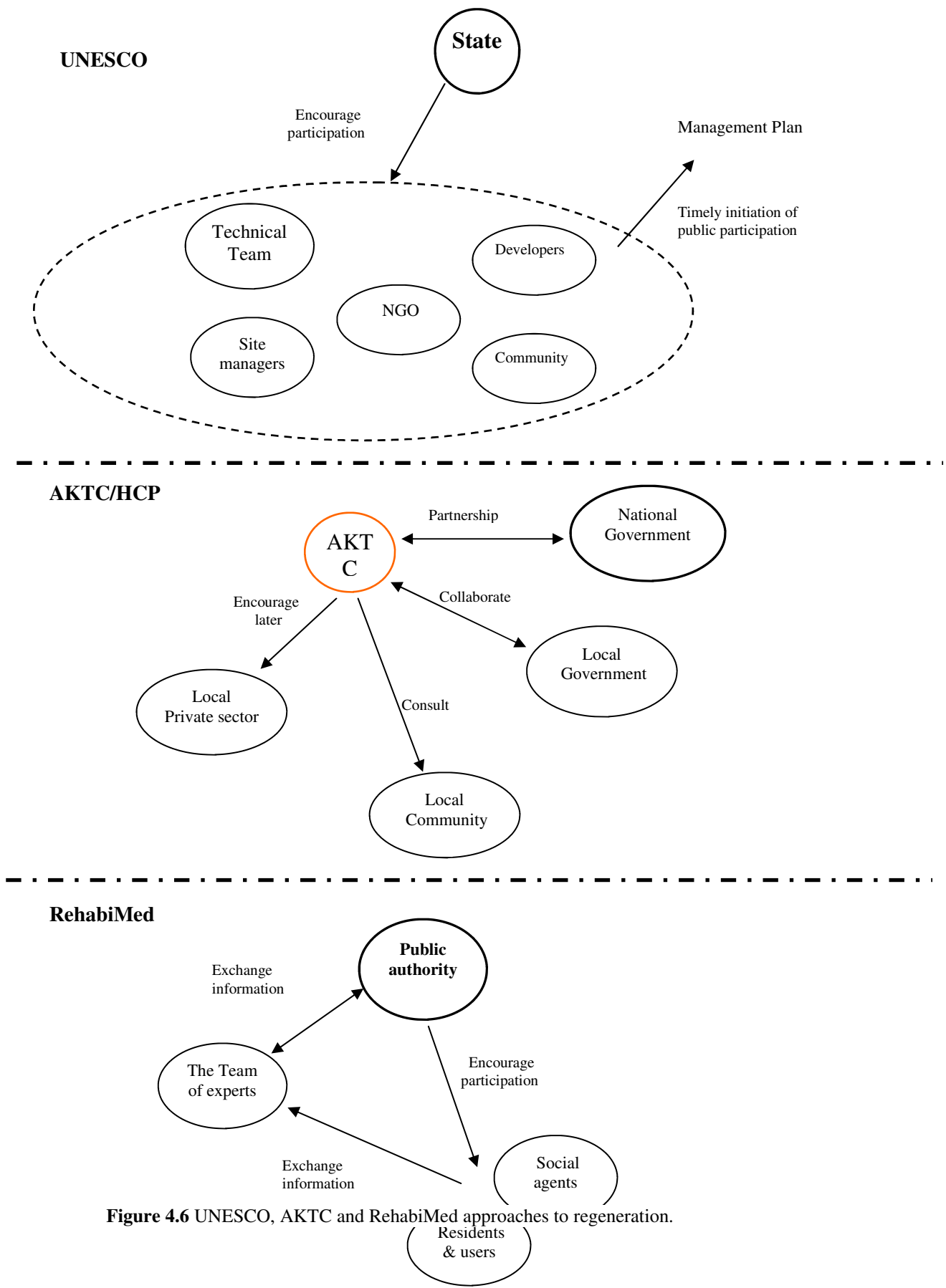
The method suggests that, in order for the process to be successful, public authorities have to promote and back the process, while the trained experts have to manage it with the involvement of the other actors present in the territory, both inhabitants and other social groups involved. The process has to take into account that, at local level, the disparity of perceptions is frequent and the sharing of perceptions among all local actors is crucial in advancing towards sustainability.

Regarding the general relations between the actors, the method recommends that public authorities establish the most regular dialogue with the technical team, which will be closely related to the public authorities and inform them of the evolution and results of

the process's various phases. The team should share its projects with social agents and citizens who will participate in both the diagnosis phase and in strategic definition, presenting their expectations and needs, expressing their interests and agreeing on them by consensus with the other agents. The exchange of information and initiatives has to take place between civil society and technical professionals, taking the form of debates, surveys, meetings, etc., in the different phases of the process (diagnosis, strategy and action).

Figure 4.6 shows the different approaches of UNESCO, AKTC and RehabiMed. These have in common the acknowledgment of a need to identify the main actors, the relations between them and how these take place – this is also very important to analyse the process. Also, it is noted that in these approaches there is an emphasis on the roles of the public authority and the technical team role. However, a weak role is assigned to market agencies (if at all), with these being identified as part of civil society or being brought in later. These approaches show the actors and the general relations between them, but without going into details of the process.

The next section is a review of the selected cities' experiences to understand how they addressed the deterioration of their historic cores, particularly open spaces, by exploring the regeneration process of these. In addition, it provides an opportunity to re-evaluate the framework originally proposed to examine the governance process. Achieving this requires briefly exploring the wider political and economic contexts in which the regeneration processes in each of these cities take place – there is no room here to describe all the historical events for each city, nor are they all relevant to address the main concern for this chapter – in order to 'set the scene' in each case before exploring the regeneration process.



In general terms, Aleppo, Cairo and Tunis, respectively located in Syria, Egypt and Tunisia, shared a common feature of increasing state power in the post-independence period. “This was largely a result of growth in the size of the bureaucracy, the police and the army, as well as, in many cases, the number of public enterprises” (Owen, 2004, p.23). These countries underwent state-led development in a process of administrative expansion and control.

This is a very general picture of these countries; however, each city/country has its circumstances. The backgrounds provided in each of the cases below focus mainly on the 19th century onwards when the cities, except Barcelona, became independent and experienced successive periods of political changes and new economic policies were adopted by their governments. However, historical periods are also mentioned along with key issues and events in the historic fabric – i.e. the main culture heritage sites – paying particular attention to the state of historic open spaces.

After presenting the background of each city, the study reviews a number of relevant regeneration projects in the selected cities which are currently (or have been recently) underway. When each these cities launched the development or rehabilitation of their historic centres, all faced a common problem, which is the degradation of their open spaces. Upgrading of open spaces in historic cores, in order to give these an active role within the urban system as a whole, was one of the aims these projects have had in common. The cities’ experiences are presented briefly below to illustrate **who** was involved, **how** they interacted and what **rationale** they used in these process (based on secondary sources as previously indicated). They do not, of course, cover the whole range and complexity of the process. Yet, experiences and outcomes from this review can serve as a source of inspiration and of examples to help situate the case study of Damascus in a wider setting vis-à-vis the importance of the Damascus / Syrian experience.

The following section reviews the regeneration process in these cities. First, however, a brief background for each one is provided and then its experience.

4.4.2 Case studies

Aleppo

Background

Aleppo is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, its existence going back to at least 1800BC. It is situated in the north of Syria and plays a major trading role in the midst of a largely agricultural hinterland. Throughout history, Aleppo was subject to a whole range of invaders (Hittites, Assyrians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Mongols, Mameluks and Ottomans). On the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Aleppo came under a French protectorate until in 1947, when it became the second city of the modern state of Syria after the capital – Damascus.

Since independence, Syria has gone through three major politico-economic periods. The first period is from 1947 until 1970, a period of great conflict among different ideologies leading at the end to adoption of socialist policies²¹. The second period is from 1970, in which the country witnessed the Correction Movement, as a turning point in Syria's history which put an end to the political conflicts and during which the government shaped economic policies according to more social-market based principles, which produced selective liberalisation. The third period is from 2000 until the current day, in which the country is still undergoing many administrative and economic reforms and the government is moving further towards a more state-guided liberal financial system.

Between 1930 and 1978 the old city of Aleppo was the subject of a series of modernising master plans. The first plan dated back to the 1930s (Ecochard & Danger), and relied on modernist planning principles. The second was prepared by another French architect, Andre Gutton, in 1952. This plan called for creating two ring roads, one encircling the old city. The result of partial implementation of this plan was the destruction of one-tenth of the intra muros area as well as entire neighbourhoods in the extra muros area (figure 4.7). By 1974, a new master plan was prepared by a French/Japanese architect, Gyoji Banshoya, in collaboration with central government. This plan called for more roads to improve accessibility. Again, parts of this plan were

²¹ According to al Ahsan (1984), four economic policies can be identified in the period 1947-70: 1958-61 United Arab Republic (U.A.R) phase; 1961-63 traditional civilian phase; 1963-66 traditional Baath phase and 1966-70 radical Baath phase.

implemented, causing the destruction of a large area in the old city (Vincent and Sergie 2005).



Figure 4.7 Map of the old city of Aleppo showing the proposed 1952 master plan to the left. To the right is a map showing the extent to which parts of the scheme had been executed by the 1980s.
Source: Bianca (1984).

The result of partial implementation of these master plans through destroying some existing plot layouts in the historic fabric and large-scale clearances is that many open spaces have been created:

“Between 1945 and 1978 the old city was subjected to a series of modernizing master plans. Major streets cut across its urban fabric, high-rise buildings towering over the old neighbourhood, out migration of the affluent to the new parts of the city, and systematic neglect of maintenance, severely affected the Old City. Inner-city problems were resolved in a typical modernist way by large-scale clearances” (CORPUS Levant team, 2004, p.30).

In the late 1970's preservationists managed to halt further demolitions by resorting to the Ministry of Culture to register the urban fabric of the Old City as a national monument. In 1986 the Old City of Aleppo was recognised as a World Heritage Site, and in the subsequent years, the Municipality of Aleppo sought funding to initiate a rehabilitation programme for its historical centre. In 1992 the German Government and the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development (AFSED) agreed to join efforts with the municipality of Aleppo (CORPUS Levant team, 2004). This initiative is further discussed in the following section.

Aleppo regeneration experience

Actors involved

The historic centre of Aleppo accommodates 110,000 inhabitants in some 350 hectares of traditional urban layout, which has undergone a regeneration process since 1992. This was after a time in which Aleppo old city was subjected to a process of partial implementation of the 1970s master plan with associated destruction. The beginning of the process was in 1977, when the Aleppo governorate had a plan to construct a fourteen-story tower adjacent to the governor's office near the Citadel and “a group of architects, geographers, engineers and historians lobbied the municipality to prevent construction of the high-rise structure” (Vincent & Sergie, 2005, p.49-50). This team was successful in getting their message across to the Syrian Ministry of Culture and UNESCO arguing that there was a need to assess urban planning policy for the old city. The next step was in 1983 when a symposium was convened under the patronage of the

country's President Hafez Al Assad for the conservation of Old Aleppo. In 1986 the old town was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site (Benoit and Comeau, 2005, p.222; CORPUS, 2004).

This initiative started at a time when the country had come out of a difficult economic period, when the state was suffering from severe economic burdens, and there was a realisation that the public sector alone was not able to lead urban development. It is not surprising therefore that the process in Aleppo witnessed the involvement of many stakeholders – public and private, local and international. This started in 1992 and included the city council through the Directorate of the Old City (DOC), with the collaboration of the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development (DOC-AFSED) and the Aga Khan Trust for Cultural (AKTC).

The project paid careful attention to maintaining the nature of the contact between the citizens and the municipality and emphasised resident participation as a guiding principle because, as the main manager of the project noted in relation to the reuse of open spaces (interview no. 37): “public space in historic cities is important because we don't have much open space, so the little we have should be attractive”. The project intervened in areas which had become vacant because houses had collapsed or been destroyed, in order to reuse them as public spaces. In some cases, the project restored empty houses or unused monuments which, in particular, are reused for certain cultural events or social infrastructure – e.g. “school kindergartens, play grounds for kids and health stations, such as what was requested by women. We made a survey because they need services near the houses and this directly contributes to improving living conditions in the area” (Interview no. 37).

Rules

A new organisational structure and a different approach towards governance were adopted during the project (see appendix 4.5 for more details on this). It was realised that changing the governance rules in the project through managing it not on the basis of central technical and bureaucratic divisions, but through area-based organisation, which cuts across the usual directorates, would be more effective: “In the Old City the boundaries between the usual directorates were much lower and planning and management was done on the basis of what that district needed” (MAM & MLAE,

2008, p.4). This was also confirmed in an interview with the GTZ manager (interview no. 37).

The experience and tools introduced through the GTZ project working in the Old City in this project was the basis for a new stage later on. This later stage adopted an enhanced approach towards decentralisation, which started in 2003 with the arrival of a new City Council in Aleppo:

“to investigate problems and priorities in providing its citizens with services in the most effective and efficient way. Through extensive discussions, especially at City Council level, an ambitious approach towards internal reorganization and decentralization was developed, initially for the Old City, but later aimed at all parts of the city. The intention is to put responsibilities for most services and tasks at the level of the ten city districts²² that have been defined for this purpose” (MAM & MLAE, 2008, p. 1).

The need for reviewing of laws and procedures for restoring old houses has been emphasised during the regeneration process. This included “revolving interest-free-loans [which] were issued along with technical assistance and exemption from permit fees and procedures. The package was small but enabled many residents to invest matching funds and maintain their residences” (CORPUS, 2004, p. 31). As the GTZ project manager put it: “...this enables people to trust and you can’t restore the city without the help of the people” (interview no. 37).

This project would have been impossible without financial means which come through three channels: the German side contributes with technical advice and financial support totalling up to €10 million (1993 to 2008); and DOC-AFSED has contributed with US\$2 million so far to the rehabilitation process. In addition, the Syrian-German ‘Debt Swap Agreement’ provides the municipality with substantial funds for the renewal of the infrastructure and other development-oriented investments (DOC & GTZ, 2006, p.11).

²² There is confusion on terminology in this context. It seems that the Arabic term for defining smaller parts of a city is usually translated as ‘sector’. In English, however, the term sector has no geographical or spatial meaning and the terms for defining part of a city are usually “city district” “ward” and ‘neighbourhood’. In this thesis we propose to use the term (city) **district** as the largest subdivision of the city. A district is a well defined area which has some administrative status. It can comprise a number of wards and neighbourhoods.

Rationale

The rehabilitation of Old Aleppo adopted a new comprehensive approach towards the process: working towards improving the residents' living conditions and reviving economic viability of the city. As the GTZ project manager noted:

“We thought you can't just restore buildings, facades or monuments.....we have people there, people living there, working there... different functions: business, manufacture, residents, tourism administration and relationships between different functions. And sometimes these functions' relationships link to certain areas, so these functions' relationships.... To leave them intact, to let them continue, this was our purpose. Not just to restore buildings. We want to keep the city intact as a living entity” (interview no. 37).

So this approach took into account public spaces of the old city and its realms; it paid attention to the socialising aspects of public spaces.

Another planning tool which has been useful here in terms of urban design of the open space is that of adopting a strategy which called for restructuring of the public spaces to form an integrated network. This was through different projects, examples of which include the rehabilitation of open spaces to become squares; a pedestrian crossing; upgrading the *souks* area around the *Grand mosque*; restructuring of the public space in front of the western city gate; restructuring of the area around the citadel (in cooperation with AKTC); planning for public spaces in neighbourhoods and upgrading the facades in *souks*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, some sectors of civil society succeeded in raising their voice and being listened to by the central government to initiate the process with the help of foreign actors. On the institutional side, the change in the organisational structure meant a decrease in the bureaucracy involved, and also attention has been paid to the problem of geographic locations of responsibilities, the need for decentralisation, for updating of laws, the importance of training and the need for building capacities. It is also noted that attention was paid to the importance of the urban design dimension in dealing with open spaces through adopting a strategy towards classification of these spaces. This attention helped to improve some open spaces through rehabilitation of the surrounding facades,

measures to reduce traffic, and prioritising pedestrian movement. All of this helped in creating more friendly open spaces for the residents' and neighbourhoods' benefit.

Cairo

Background

Cairo, 'mother of the world', was founded by the Fatimid dynasty in 969AD and was subject to Arab, *Mameluk* and Ottoman periods of rule. From 1798 to 1801, Egypt was occupied by Napoleon's French army, to be ruled again by the Ottoman till 1882. The country then came under British control until Egypt attained independence in 1922. No major social and physical changes were then noted until the city witnessed the revolution against the British protectorate in 1952 (Sedky, 2004).

Since the revolution in 1952, Egypt has experienced two major politico-economic periods. The first one started with President *Jamal Abdel Nasser* and the country was modelled on socialist principles in which the "government policy was characterized by property redistribution, housing reform and construction of large-scale building projects" (Stewart 1999, p. 130). The government was strongly centralised; the economy shifted from supplying European markets to focus on the development of the Egyptian economy, based on standard socialist planning models – a series of five-year plans focusing on large-scale projects. The keystone for Egyptian economic development was an import-substitution policy which relied on Soviet 'turn-key' manufacturing operations (Waterbury, 1983 cited in Stewart, 1999). According to Stewart (1999), although the regime shifted towards a focus on the 'masses', little room was given for popular participation in either politics or urban development.

The second period started in the 1970s, when Sadat announced the new open market economic policy. However, the national economy remained dominated by the public sector and central planning and very limited amount of capital was attracted limited foreign investment. This policy benefited few people, so public opposition rose from the dense residential areas against it. Egypt was completely transitioned into a capitalist system under Mubarak, who succeeded Sadat after his assassination in 1981. Mubarak followed more conservative actions towards the open market policies. These actions were to avoid public opposition to moving away from the socialist ideals, which

benefited the lower and middle classes, towards the open market policies, which benefited the upper classes (Sedky 2004).

Cairo's population has tripled since 1952. This growth combined with disinvestment in the city centre areas and the influx of people created stresses in the urban fabric that condemned many people to lower standards of living in economic and social conditions. According to AKTC *et al.* (2005), the amount of green space per inhabitant was roughly equivalent to the size of a footprint. It is one of the lowest proportions in the world. Public open spaces show signs of decay, and the lack of management; they are poorly maintained and deteriorating throughout the historic fabric, being used mainly as parking lots and spaces for dumping of rubble.

Cairo, as many historic cities, has been subject to a series of master plans. The 1956 plan overlooked Cairo's historic core (Serageldin, 1989). The greater Cairo Commission introduced a new plan in 1969 with an attempt to institute the policy of 'concentrated decentralisation'. This plan followed the guidelines of 1956 but failed to achieve its aim. The 1970s witnessed many urban rehabilitation schemes prepared for historic Cairo. According to Fahmy (2007), some of these plans were extremely good but never saw the light, while others, far lower in quality, were implemented. The 1983 plan, updated in 1990, addressed historic Cairo's high population density and the employment and basic services for its inhabitants, adopting improved accessibility, preserving the built heritage and attracting tourist visits. Relating to the historic core, the plan called for creating new thoroughfares, adequate spaces for traffic and open spaces for public parks

This plan raised UNESCO awareness, particularly of the fact that the Egyptian government intended to go ahead with the plans. In October 1992, an earthquake measuring 5.9 on the Richter scale hit Cairo for 20 seconds. This needed an immediate response. UNESCO mandated a technical mission to assess the damage and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) allocated US\$3 million to develop a reactive plan to upgrade historic Cairo; however, this is still nothing more than an exemplary 'study' (Sedky, 2004; Ibrahim, 2007).

Among these events, an international seminar²³ was held in 1984 to discuss the urban growth and its impact on Cairo and its historic core. This seminar provided an opportunity for Cairo when the Aga Khan made an offer to the Governor of Cairo to build and operate a public park, placed at the disposal of the inhabitants of Cairo and its visitors, as a gift financed and developed by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (O'Reilly, 2004). The park project along with a second project – uncovering of 1.3 km of historic wall – led AKTC to consider a third project, which is the regeneration of the neighbouring area of the park, the *al Darb al Ahmar* (ADAA) district. This opportunity is further discussed next.

Cairo regeneration experience

Actors involved

Actors involved in the Cairo experience are mainly central and local government, an external agency, other private partners and local community. The central government (represented by the Ministry of Culture and the Supreme Council of Antiquities) and local government signed an agreement with AKTC in 1992, whereby the parties agreed to the definition of the 30 hectare *Al Azhar* Park project site and the scope of the development; the establishment of an Egyptian company as an extension of AKTC to deal with all matters concerning the park's planning, implementation and operations; and the constitution of the *Azhar* Park Authority Board to oversee the operations of the completed project. Later on, another project, which was launched to rehabilitate the *al Darb al Ahmar* (ADAA) district, was supported by the Historic Cities Support Programme (HCSP), another branch of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), established in 1991. These projects also involved other private partners such as the Ford Foundation, Swiss-Egyptian Development Fund, World Monuments Fund and French Institute for Archaeology.

AKTC followed a participatory approach in which the residents of ADAA were involved in the design process and, moreover, they were provided with a loan mechanism for rehabilitation. The park, which replaced a derelict open space, provided Cairo with a green space. Besides, the rehabilitation of ADAA involved improving the public open space in the district. These two projects provide an approach towards

²³ Seminar nine in the series *Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World*, was called "The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo", organised by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, and held in Cairo, Egypt, November 11-15, 1984.

generally improving the quality of life, and more in particular improving the public realm in the historic city.

Rules

The approach taken by the AKTC in the *Al Azhar* Park project and by the Housing Rehabilitation Programme (HRP) to rehabilitate ADAA was based on action planning rather than on conventional master planning. As such, a flexible framework for development was introduced to replace the existing administrative procedures, which “represent a major stumbling block to the successful implementation of the new conservation-led plan” (Ibrahim, 2007, p.263). This approach entailed revisions to the existing planning and administrative mechanisms and provided much financial and technical support by HRP. An appropriate body of knowledge was developed to address existing structural problems. This knowledge was disseminated through training local workgroups and craftsmen, introducing appropriate building materials and techniques and producing construction manuals. HRP was aiming not only to preserve the traditional urban fabric, but also to build community assets through strengthening inhabitants’ sense of communal responsibility (Ibrahim, 2007).

In relation to open spaces, the improvement of the *Tablita* market – which was under threat of being completely removed because of uncontrolled proliferation of street vendors, poor management and deterioration of environmental conditions – is a typical example where AKTC prepared a plan in close cooperation with vendor representatives and in consultation with Cairo Governorate, in order to provide a solution for the open space – the market (AKTC, Bianca *et al.* 2005).

Rationale

AKTC believed that upgrading of deteriorated public open spaces is needed to improve the quality of life in the neighbourhoods, as well as to attract visitors interested in Cairo’s history. To this end, AKTC worked to improve the open spaces through carrying out a detailed survey in ADAA neighbourhoods and discussed with residents ways in which the current use could be improved when desirable or discontinued when unpleasant. Types of open spaces included commercial streets and small neighbourhood squares. *Aslam* square is an example of a small neighbourhood square which has been regenerated in order to serve as a pedestrian link, forum for commercial activities and

social interaction (i.e. socialisation as well as other more individualised social functions) in the *Aslam* neighbourhood (AKTC, Bianca *et al.* 2005).

Conclusion

The Cairo experience shows how an international donor initiated the process and financed it and worked with the government departments and local community. It also showed how the upgrading of open spaces was a part of a larger urban integrated approach towards regeneration of historic Cairo. This integrated approach has two steps. The first is to analyse the deeper causes of poverty and define ways of creating an enabling environment that can uplift people's standards and resources. The second is to link that to tangible domains where asset creation can take place (AKTC, Bianca *et al.* 2005).

Tunis

Background

The city of **Tunis** dates back to the fourth century BC. Located in north-eastern Tunisia on the Lake of Tunis, it is connected to the Mediterranean Sea's Gulf of Tunis by a canal which terminates at the port of La Goulette / *Halq al Wadi*. The ancient city of Carthage is located just north of Tunis along the coastal part. Tunis experienced Berbers, Numidians, Romans, flourished after Muslim conquest in the 7th century and was controlled by the *Hafsid* dynasty from the 13th to the 16th century. The city was taken twice by Spain in the 16th century and fell under Ottoman rule in 1574, which lasted until French occupation from 1881 to 1956, when Tunisia became independent.

Unlike Syria, which had a 'gap' period which was conflictive between colonial domination and fully independent state from 1947-1970, and Egypt from 1922-1952, Tunisia after independence entered a period of state expansion and control by the regime which adopted a slightly different approach. The regime of *Bourguiba* and his successor *Ben Ali* in 1987 favoured western foreign policy and support for the economy. With the new regime of Ben Ali, the government worked on establishing new institutions and reformed the institutional framework for environmental protection.

However, immediately after independence in 1956, the central government supported a modernist vision of spatial organisation which led to the destruction of some 20 hectares

of the old fabric in order to ease vehicular traffic through construction of a road through the Medina. This alerted the local population and led to creation of the Association for the Safeguarding of Medina (ASM), to reverse the situation with the collaboration of the municipality of Tunis (Kenzari, 2004).

ASM, with support from UNESCO, fought to change the central government attitude towards the old city “another important point to stress is the realization by the city’s decision-makers and developers of the need to adopt a coherent approach to the city’s future development” (Akrouit-Yaiche 2002, p.248). These efforts went on until in 1970 the position of the government changed because “it accepted the concept of safeguarding the medina and the integration of the historic area within the general scheme of modernization of the capital” (Kenzari, 2004, p. 117). Thus obtaining political support was another achievement towards building up a sustainable approach to upgrade the old fabric. This is further elaborated on in the following section.

Tunis regeneration experience

Actors involved

The medina of Tunis occupied an area of 270 hectares with very high density (550 inhabitants per hectare). The Tunis experience (which started as early as 1958) involved several actors including central/local government, the international agency UNESCO, and the Association for Safeguarding of Medina (ASM), which was created in 1967 and played a vital role in the process as it succeeded in aborting the state’s plan through the municipality, following its stated aim of “working to protect traditional urban environments, historic monuments and all objects forming part of the culture heritage, and taking any action such as may ensure the preservation and enhancement of the Medina”(Statutes of ASM, 29 August 1967, cited in Akrouit-Yaiche, 2002, p. 247).

The ASM’s Atelier d’Architecture et d’Urbanisme is one of the leading consultancies in Tunisia and moreover ASM has a multidisciplinary team who built up a thorough knowledge of the area and a reliable data bank because of its intensive work in diagnosing the situation, making a survey of neighbouring population’s needs and documentation. This led to proposals for integrated operations, not just restoring the historic monuments (Cantacuzino,1985; Akrouit-Yaiche, 2002). ASM acted as a mediator between the state and community and played a vital role in upgrading projects

of the medina. “Within its 15-strong team of urbanist-architects, it acts as advisor, facilitator, benchmark and partner to all the other bodies involved: the state, the regional, municipal and local authorities, cultural associations, and so forth” (Akrouit-Yaiche 2002, p. 251).

Rules

The changes in attitudes and acceptance of the necessary involvement of other parties in a partnership, taken by the city’s decision-makers and developers, required taking some measures and revising regulations to support this policy, such as issuing a code regulating the designation and management of protected areas, encouraging decentralisation, giving municipalities more power to improve their performance and provisions in the Ninth Economic Development plan.²⁴

Economic instruments were crucial to translate ASM’s vision on the ground. This happened by financial support through two channels. The first was from the municipality: “Since its creation over 30 years ago, its activities and functions have evolved considerably, with backing from the municipal authorities, a large portion of whose budget is allocated to it”(Akrouit-Yaiche, 2002, p.248). The second came as a result of ASM’s activities, which made it emerge as a credible promoter of ideas. These were supported by UNESCO and recognised and financed by the World Bank and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (FADES)(Akrouit-Yaiche, 2004).

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- ²⁴ “The code du Patrimoine (LawNo.94-35 of 24 February 1994) providing for the designation of protected areas and their management by means of conservation plans and accompanying incentive measures (loans, subsidies, tax relief, etc.);
 - the revision of the town planning code, to encourage decentralization and provide a better framework for urban development;
 - the adoption of a "Development Plan for Municipalities" granting municipal authorities wider powers to improve management and remedy any Malfunctions attributable to the large number of parties involved;
 - the decision by the municipality of Tunis to build a city museum in the heart of the Medina (there has been strong support for the building of such museum, since 1911, as evidenced by the records of the then city council) and also a new city hall building within the Medina, on a strategic site with historical associations; such measures are bound to have a major impact on revitalizing and enhancing the city Centre;
 - Provisions in the Ninth Economic Development Plan, currently being implemented, aimed at restoring city centres to residential use so as to cope with the lack of building land, particularly in Tunis; marginalization of the centre would have dire consequences for a balanced functioning city, while outward expansion often eats up valuable farmland” (Akrouit Yaiche, 2002, p.248).

Rationale

Realisation that the medina is both part of the heritage and a residential neighbourhood is an important point to stress here. “In paying as much attention to people as to bricks and mortar, ASM acknowledges that those who are most directly affected by the safeguarding of the heritage of the medina are the people who live there”(Akrout-Yaiche 2002, p. 252).

Attention was paid to spatial qualities of the fabric, through:

- Determination of uses by physical and socio-economic surveys.
- The new building designs based on the traditional architecture vocabulary of the town.
- Resolving traffic and parking problems. In addition to that certain routes were restricted to pedestrian traffic.
- The fabric is very dense, consisting of internal courtyards, private balconies and open spaces which were few. However, these were improved through paying attention to facades, opening and materials. “Plain white walls with projecting or recessed blocks contrast with deep openings and dark windows, while arcades and arched entrances to buildings and alleyways articulate the urban spaces”(Davidson, 1995, p. 52; Akrout-Yaiche, 2004).

Conclusion

Finally, it is noted that the process was initiated locally by the ASM, which is a key actor in the process. ASM has been supported and its project financed from national as well as international sources. The process also witnessed administrative reforms and revision of the planning system, along with changes in the attitude towards the historic medina, particularly among national actors, which is essential to ensure sustainable development of the historic cores.

Barcelona

Background

Barcelona has a long history, having been established two thousand years ago. Barcelona is the capital city of the Catalunya region in Spain. It was subject to Roman and Arab invasions till the 11th Century. The late 15th century marked the beginning of a new phase in Barcelona in which she became a part of the unified Spain and experienced a period of conflicts with the central government of Madrid (Marshall 2004; Busquets 2005). In the 19th century the city experienced industrialisation: “the definition of new urban forms: new types of buildings (stations, markets, restaurants, etc.) and urban planning schemes involving the construction of new streets and the introduction of new services (gas, drainage, etc.). This was the time of the great new town projects, the Eixample; of suburban development and the demolition of the citadel” (Busquets 2005,p19). On the other hand, the city was the scene of many class conflicts.

In 1931, when Spain became a republic and Catalunya gained autonomy within this, Barcelona experienced a new but short period of intellectual and artistic activity, when the ideas on modern movement in architecture and urban planning flourished. These faced an end when in 1939 Barcelona experienced the Franco period for 36 years. This was characterised by isolationism in terms of the economy until 1959. During the 1960s and 1970s many Spanish cities went through a process of growth which led them to become large metropolitan areas²⁵. The process of urban growth led to social segregation and urban conflicts and therefore urban social movements began to appear and became stronger at the end of 1960s, during the final period of Franquismo until 1975 and the transition to democracy during the remainder of the decade, when a new democratic government came to power in the first free elections in 1979.

²⁵ The urban development of these areas followed three patterns which defined the structure of residential peripheries of most Spanish cities until today. These patterns are, as Calavita and Ferrer identified (Marshall, 2004):

1. The development of suburban areas based on the 19th century extensions with narrow streets, which have been characterised by lack of facilities, difficulty in car movement and poor conditions in lighting and ventilation.
2. Marginal areas of urbanisation which are built illegally in the extreme periphery of the city. The origin of this pattern was in the 1920s. These areas suffer from a lack of public services and become a strong focus of urban conflicts.
3. New housing projects to accommodate low income families appeared in the 1950s and spread during the 1960s and early 1970s. Because priority was given to house the increasing numbers of people, public facilities suffered from neglect. In addition these projects were located in isolated sites with poor conditions and high densities.

In this particular political context, these social movements emerged under difficult conditions and served as opposition to the dictatorship. “In the Spanish context, urban social movements were characterised by:

- Direct action and protest tactics focused on issues of collective consumption;
- A grassroots orientation; and
- A certain distance from political parties until the mid-1970s” (Calavita and Ferrer, 2004, p.52).

Neighbourhood associations had a strong role in these social movements. They protested on daily problems experienced in the neighbourhood and took different forms. The initial ones were collections of signatures, assemblies, exhibitions, gathering around events, etc.; other forms were the occupation of public spaces, human barriers, hijacking buses and rent strikes. At the end of 1960s, these social movements grew quickly in parallel with rapid urbanisation and developed to be a network between different types of protests. By the early 1970s neighbourhood associations widened their targets to include urban planning issues such as the need for public facilities and spaces and opposition to the existing 1953 Comarcal plan – which was too general plan and required several partial plans with ordinances in order to be implemented. In 1973, a number of neighbourhoods (whose houses were destroyed by implementing the 1953 plan) came together to stop the plan. This important episode was a sign of the late period of the Franco regime and the growing power of the social movements (Calavita and Ferrer, 2004).

These movements were the seeds for Barcelona’s success in urban regeneration of the city, which began in the 1980s when Barcelona entered the recovery period in which it underwent a radical transformation, which changed its image and enhanced its quality of life (Calavita and Ferrer in Marshall, 2004). The new government in 1979 promoted new public spaces to improve inhabitants’ living conditions and encourage democratic discussion.

Barcelona regeneration experience

Some literature suggest that the case of Barcelona is one of the successful city governance ‘models’ which have mainly had public priorities as a basis for their regeneration policies. Borja (1996) summarised the process which ‘recovered’ Barcelona in three parts: the new democratic government which came to power after the

free election in 1979; the physical transformation of the city; and a city project which got the broad approval of civil society. Moreover, Barcelona has been pioneering public space policies, where many open spaces were renovated and redesigned. These policies depended on 'projects as opposed to planning' with no standard design, but 'tailor-made' solutions place-by-place. This section shows who, how and what rationale there were behind this public space policy.

Actors involved

Central, regional and local governments have all played a part in the urban renaissance of Barcelona. At the national government, this happened when the new constitution in 1978 transformed Spain from a centralised administration into 17 autonomous communities, each with full powers on a wide range of issues including designing urban policies together with local councils, which have a high degree of autonomy. At the regional level, the autonomous community of Catalonia has its identity through opening to the Mediterranean Sea and its capital – Barcelona.

At the local level, the municipal government is the central actor in what has happened since it was given democratic legitimacy following the 1979 elections. Adding to that, the support of other key politicians has also been important in Barcelona's transforming process. Three socialist mayors – Narcis Serra (1979-1982), Pasqual Maragall (1982-1997) and Joan Clos (1997-2006) – helped to facilitate and boost Barcelona's urban relaunch programme. In addition, Jordi Borja, an academic and political activist, took on the job of decentralising the organisation of the council, a vital part of the reform of the council's structure (Marshall, 2004; Busquets, 2005).

A new office was created called Servei de Projectes Urbans to work with new projects in the 10 city districts. Meetings are held with local people in each district as part of the process, and architects at the office coordinate the technical and administrative aspects of the project. There are a large number of local architects from private practice working in collaboration with – and doing projects for – the office. The municipal districts played a key role in facilitating dialogue between the civic organisations and the designers of the urban projects (Marti, 2004).

The neighbourhood associations are strong and have an effective role. One outcome of their force was the location of services which were seen as key to serving residents and allowing wider participation (Marshall, 2004).

Rules

The regional autonomous communities in Spain have wide power to design urban policies, with the legislative capacity to approve their own urban laws. Town councils at a local level also participate in the design and implementation of urban policies.

Administrative reform and decentralisation put the neighbourhoods back on the map through the creation of ten ‘mini town halls’ in Barcelona, each with a local district council made up of the councillors for that part of the city and a district leader. District offices gradually took over all front-line services, although specialist services have remained in a strong central core (Marshall, 2004).

Borja (interview no. 3) further explained that the city government counted with a team of good technicians and managed to integrate in the administration some quality architects and urban planners – not only the famous ones, but also young ones, who sometimes came from citizens’ movements. He also noted how decentralisation of 10 districts and mechanisms of participation that were implemented in early 80s, created positive conditions to multiply public initiative: it helped to establish a positive dialectics between citizens’ demands and political response.

The special event of the Olympic Games in 1992 played as a trigger for urban regeneration and motivation for local and national authorities as well as a financial support. The Olympic Games helped make large-scale improvements to the city. Investment was used to drive development of the city plan through opening to the sea with the construction of the Olympic Village and Olympic Port in Poblenou, a decayed neighbourhood. Various new centres were created, and modern sports facilities were built. The construction of ring roads around the city helped reduce the density of the traffic, new hotels were built and some old ones were refurbished. Another important point is that Barcelona benefited from European Union (EU) structural funds (PAP and RAC 2004). In addition, private funds became increasingly important to finance the urban transformation of the city: “overall investment amounted to 503 million € for the public sector and 613 million € for the private sector” (Benoit & Comeau, 2005p. 221).

Rationale

‘Public space is the city’ was the essential principle of the urban theory of Barcelona’s three socialist mayors (Marshall, 2004, p.92; Busquets, 2005).

Public spaces have been classified into many types and therefore the projects have many different scales from major to local. According to Borja (interview no. 3), in democratic Barcelona (from 70s onwards) public spaces were addressed in 3 periods:

1. Public spaces of the small and medium scale. These used land that is already available. These operations were linked to provision of social equipment and almost always as an answer to citizens’ demands. This period covers the time from the end of 70s to the end of 80s. This culture still persists nowadays in the citizens’ consciousness.
2. Public spaces related to big projects and aiming to offer a higher level of urban quality. Projects linked to large facilities generated during the Olympic Games (1992) and other big cultural or administrative events: to reconvert railroad areas, port areas, industrial areas, and rebuild waterfronts. This was typical of the pre-Olympic period and it went on during the years that followed the Olympic Games. There are some cases that suffered the effects of privatisation tendencies.
3. Public spaces integrated in operations of renewal of ‘marginal’ or deteriorated housing areas. Associated to the late 90s, both in the old city and in surroundings.

The urban design dimension was strongly practiced through classification and development of a wide range of open space types. In the historic core, these are:

- Squares – which can be subdivided into many groups: square with monuments; squares produced by demolition; regular spaces; irregular spaces and intersections; town wall spaces; squares with vegetation and gardens.
- Roads – historic routes which became streets: porches along the road; arches; the opening up of new streets and new streets layouts;

- Unitary projects – groups of street blocks or small developments constituting a new urban fabric: passages; recesses; widening and entrances or gateways.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the transformation of the city happened because of a combination of several factors. It was the result of a democratic process which enabled change in the national political regime, which brought greater autonomy to regional and municipal authorities. It relied on a political foundation. The creation of districts encouraged the development of public participation, eased relations with the community's bodies and improved discussion with the inhabitants, together with the urban policy of creating public spaces and amenities in all neighbourhoods. Funding was a critical component of the entire process. Having a clear and integrated vision about the use of the public spaces is another point to highlight.

Reflection

After reviewing the background of the selected cities at macro level, it is noted that these cities/countries, except Barcelona, all got independence in the middle of the 20th century, from which they began a new period of building up as independent countries. However, these countries – again except Barcelona – adopted foreign models for their overall development, as explained by Hasan (1998). As a consequence, built environment in general deteriorated, including the historic cores of these cities. This reflects the governments' policies and institutional arrangements based on master planning and functional planning, which failed to address the complexity of the cultural heritage in adapting /reusing/redesigning public spaces to the contemporary times.

Also the review highlights the paradigm of master plans in these cities, which were prepared during the colonial periods or under the supervision of a foreign team. These master plans relied on the functionalist model and continue to be used as a spatial planning tool, but they cannot regulate urban dynamics because they failed to be attuned to the role of complex social relations in urban planning and urban policies. Furthermore, it is noted that after independence, the institutional structures and urban policies established during 1960s–1980s were proven insufficient given the scale and the complexity of modern Mediterranean cities. PAP and RAC (2004) provided a cursory assessment of the master plans implementation in the southern and eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea in the following points:

- “they are out of step with respect to societal problems and evolutions;
- their implementation was hindered by insufficient public financing and often by the lack of government control over land use and resources;
- they were elaborated in a centralised way while their application has run into inertia;
- their too great attention for the future of the urban macro-form has led to undertaking too extensive road equipment, new urbanisation without taking into account the deterioration process which followed in already urbanised areas” (PAP and RAC, 2004, p.4).

City	Independence date	Dates of Master plans	Preparation of master plan by	Date of Inscription of the old city in World Heritage list (area in hectares).	Regeneration dates & organisations of regeneration projects
Cairo	1952	1956/69 1973 1983	N/A Local planner Local/foreign team	1979	1992 AKTC
Tunis	1956	1935 1958	Local/foreign team	1979 (270 ha)	1967 by ASM
Aleppo	1947	1930s/1952 1974	Foreign Local/foreign team	1986 (350 ha)	1992 by GTZ
Damascus	1947	1936 1968	Foreign Local/foreign team	1979 (128 ha)	
Barcelona	N/A	1863 1953 1976	Local engineer	N/A (200 ha)	1980s and 90s by local and national governments

Table 4.1 Significant urban planning/regeneration information in case study cities.

Source: compiled by the author from various sources.

The Barcelona case shows differences in that it did not go through a colonial period in the modern era. It has a long planning history of strategic urban interventions, from the old walled city to the modern metropolis, which is one of the historical factors that have helped shape Barcelona's 'way of doing' planning (Miranda, 2006).

The previous section is useful to give a picture of the cities' contexts at the macro level. The following section analyses the attempts and projects launched in these cities in order to regenerate their historic fabric, with particular reference to upgrading their open spaces. The analysis is under the same three main headings: actors, rules and rationale.

4.4.1 Analysis of the regeneration process in the Mediterranean cities

The previous section reviewed the regeneration process in the selected cities to explore the actors, the rules they interact with and the rationales they use. In the following section, these experiences and outputs will be analysed, first, however, general issues about the process are highlighted.

It is noted that Aleppo, Cairo and Tunis continue to rely on master plans for their urban development. These master plans contradicted the nature of the historic cores and reached a level where local population and conservationists responded to the danger posed to historic centres by these plans and started preventative action. This action needed two matters to be translated into results on the ground: political support from the national government and assistance from international donors (UNESCO, AKTC and GTZ), who provide financial, administrative and technical support.

It is also noted that administrative reforms were part of all the reviewed experiences, in most cases (except Barcelona) because international donors or agencies – which called for today's prevailing international regeneration philosophy and practice – were confronted with certain problems posed by the nature of the planning system in these cities. As Bianca (2004) explained, the planning system in Cairo is highly centralised, with little decision-making power being delegated to local administrative units. The division of governmental authority into various sectoral domains (Traffic, Housing, Antiquities, Religious Domains, and so on) makes it difficult to overcome fragmentation of tasks and functions in the field.

This regeneration process happened through the application of 'action plans'. The usefulness of this type of plans appears to be in focusing resources and energies, but they are seldom sufficient, and moreover, the energies that are put into such temporary initiatives may divert attention from a real need for innovation and to make steady, incremental improvements in mainstream policies and practices in local government, as well as to institutionalise the role of community in that process (Carley and Smith, 2001).

This leads to another important point that should be highlighted with regard to the implication for changes in the wider planning and urban development systems. Though all experiences were subject to some criticism, the case of Barcelona was more successful than the other cities in SEMC, due to the key changes in Barcelona's urban planning and development. These changes originally originated in critical political change supported by the power of urban social movements and the expansion of its reach to include large-scale planning issues during the 1970s. They were backed up by a strong public leadership, the remaining importance of urban social movements and a major role played by local architects who shaped the municipal urban policy. This showed a transition in urban planning whereby the city came to be understood more closely as a social-political arena and the role of complex social relations in urban planning and urban policies were highlighted. In the cities of SEMC this happened only on a small scale, where international agencies did the job with limited public involvement and during a short period.

Actors involved

The process in Aleppo, Cairo and Tunis (but not Barcelona) took place under 'action plans' which focused on specific areas within the historic core and had similar characteristics: initiated by central/local government with help from foreign actors; financed by international donors; and designed by a combined team of local and foreign professionals. This type of process could have an immediate impact on the built environment and could escape and facilitate the bureaucracy and constraints of regulations and procedures, which often characterise planning processes in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean.

These processes in Aleppo, Cairo and Tunis showed the necessity to involve a wide range of actors, where the state practices the major control and decision making through its national organisations. Particular attention has been given to involving the local residents, particularly for upgrading of open spaces, because as Bianca noted:

“Often public open spaces – whether streets, squares, or barren land – are neglected because they are seen as residual spaces towards which no one feels responsible. Re-establishing a sense of ownership and care by involving the local community in corresponding upgrading projects is a tool to foster civic pride and solidarity” (Bianca 2004, p.73).

It is also noted that local actors who succeeded to initiate the process need to have the power to influence decision making, and also the financial means to support their project. In Tunis, ASM possessed the power to firstly convince national government to change its attitude towards the medina and secondly influence the municipality of Tunis not only in decisions taken, but also in financial terms, as a large proportion of the municipality's budget goes for ASM activities and projects.

Another point noted from the processes is the introduction of the partnership with donor bodies to these projects. In Tunis and Aleppo, that was feasible through the collaboration with bi- and multi-lateral external donors who have initiated some large scale area urban regeneration projects: in Tunis, the *Hafsia* project with the World Bank funding; in Aleppo, the old city with German GTZ funds.

The Barcelona case showed how social movements which emerged during the 1970s had a great impact in initiating the process. Thus, the process initiated from the grassroots, which participated in decision making as well as the design process of public spaces, so the participatory approach was strongly practised. Also the urban design dimension was strongly practised through many types of public spaces.

In conclusion, regeneration of open spaces should involve a wide range of actors to be more effective. The Barcelona case showed that involvement of a wider range of actors in the urban regeneration of the historic open spaces is still taking place with a limited role of the local residents. As it is noted in Cairo's experience: "However, a deeper level of intervention takes place to address the existing institutional setting preventing residents from investing in ADAA" (Ibrahim, 2007, p.263); and also in Aleppo: "Aleppo's challenge is to find the right level of involvement of the government and civil society, and assure adequate balance" (Khechen, 2005, p.65).

Rules

In terms of rules, it is noted that these processes entailed improvement of the communication to 'bridge the gap' across the local authority departments and on the other hand between the local community and authority. The international donors had to deal with both gaps in order to improve the performance. This is how GTZ worked in **Aleppo** when it adopted, with the city municipality, a more efficient approach towards governance and at the same time encouraged public participation. Also, in Cairo, the

HCSP in DAA worked closely cooperating with the Cairo Governorate, the Supreme Council of Antiquities and the *Awqaf* Department (Religious Endowments), while at the same time mobilising a maximum of community participation and involvement.

Administrative reform, decentralisation and revision of planning laws and codes have been noted in the cities' experiences to ensure a more flexible framework towards urban regeneration.

In addition, technical and financial support were very important and were provided by international donors, except in Barcelona where the European funding and the Olympic Games was a source of funding and where Barcelona had a strong urban planning tradition as well as a strong body of architects and planners.

Rationale

Changing the rationale towards urban planning, particularly the regeneration of open spaces has been a critical factor in these urban regeneration experiences. At the city level, the change from master planning to adopt a development plan or 'action plan' approach has been noted. In terms of focus, there was a change from monumentality and rehabilitation of buildings towards considering neighbourhoods or district areas, along with thinking of how open spaces are to be utilised within the community, and how they can be brought back to full use. However, as noted briefly above, action plans without an overall strategy can also be limited to producing fragments of urban space and form.

An integrated approach was followed towards regeneration of these historic cores, in which improvement of open spaces was one component. So for example, AKTC has developed an integrated socio-economic development approach in which targets for social-economic improvements are defined clearly as physical targets and agreed to by all the actors involved prior to the start of any project. Barcelona has developed a citywide policy looking at the distribution of public spaces, public spaces and traffic and types of public spaces. The main aim of that was to create new public spaces in each neighbourhood for people meeting, talking, discussing, playing and unwinding and to ensure better access for people with special needs.

Results of the process

The regeneration process in the selected cities introduced an integrated development approach – urban regeneration with conservation of existing stock – which has benefits

at local, national as well as at international level. At the local level, the results were achieved through wider governance: civic participation, decentralisation and more friendly open spaces. This approach is setting standards for the formulation of an urban development policy at national level and, moreover, has been translated into international recognition.

In **Aleppo**, the municipal administration was awarded the Veronica Rudge Green Prize by the Harvard University Graduate School for Design in April 2005 for urban planning for the project, which also received an award from the Arab Cities Organization in Qatar in 2005. At the local level, it has brought life again to streets and open spaces, by turning them into attractive and lively public spaces, and has helped improve the quality of life. So in Aleppo, for example, turning a waste disposal site into an attractive public space (*Sahat Al-Hatab* in the *Jedeide* quarter) has health and economic benefits for the local residents' life (GTZ, 2006).

In **Cairo**, because the historic core is so dense and lacks open spaces, *al Azhar* Park as a green space improves the environmental conditions and provides many leisure and social open spaces. It is a 'lung' for the city and a major public facility on a metropolitan scale (AKTC *et al.*, 2005). In **Tunis**, the ASM's achievements have been honoured by international institutions: the Arab Towns Organization Prize for the restoration of Dar Lasram in 1985; the Aga Khan Award for Architecture three times – for Hafsia I in 1983, the Sidi El Aloui School in 1989 and Hafsia II in 1995 (Akrouit-Yaiche 2002).

Some of these processes are still at the beginning and the outcomes are still limited, but there are also criticisms and opinions differ about the successfulness of such processes and products. One example could be the *Hafsia* project in Tunis, which has been judged as a successful operation due to the integration of the new project within its traditional environment. However, when it comes to another project, namely *Bab-Souika*, implemented in the mid-1980s, it is noted that the emphasis has been put on “the design of public plazas, and of a traffic tunnel, rather than on the urban design and restructuring that would benefit the inhabitants of the neighbourhood” (Kenzari 2004, p.117).

Barcelona was recognised for its experience and has been awarded the RIBA²⁶ award for the regeneration of the whole city. Even though upgrading of open space in the historic core of Barcelona has been done in an integrated way and improved the quality of life, it has been criticised for the superficial way in which this has dealt with urban issues. Magrinyà (2005) argued that the process of upgrading is limited to eliminating buildings and/or introducing new commercial establishments around the spaces without taking into account the social change which has happened in the spaces, the new social groups who are using these spaces, thus producing open spaces which are becoming more complex objects in a tissue which is in the process of transformation due to significant flows of immigration.

Moreover, his argument highlighted the role of public realm in socialisation. He argued by using examples from Ciutat Vella, that the traditional idea of public space has lost its meaning in an age characterised by complex and fragmented territory and the co-existence of different mobilities:

“The new squares have been designed according to the idealized model of the agora, but with a certain stamp of modernity in their constructive elements. As a result, these new urban spaces do not function well as urban forms, because they have not been accepted as part of the integral fabric of the communities who live there, because they have no real utility for them” (Magrinyà, 2005, p.282).

Another critique was given by Marti (2004), who wrote that decentralisation of public space design makes easy considerations of some particularities of the neighbourhoods, but it makes the development of a general structural vision for the whole city more difficult and therefore weakens the municipal leadership of the public space culture. He noted that an increasing number of urban designers consider the decentralisation of public space design a mistake.

So these processes have both positive and negative results. It is noted that the negative result or the criticism arose when evaluating the benefits of the end product for the local community, particularly because these cities are still inhabited and not purely tourist cities: “after all, it is their [residents’] immediate environment that is at stake” (GTZ, 2005, p.33). And as AKTC *et al.* (2005) noted, the maintenance of open space should

²⁶ The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) since 1848 has advised the Monarch on the award of the Royal Gold Medal to individuals for distinguished services to architecture. In 1999 precedent was broken to award the Royal Gold Medal to the City of Barcelona.

not be implemented against the will of the community, but through its direct involvement and participation.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the context of production of public spaces in the SEMC and on some experiences of these cities in the regeneration of public spaces in their historic fabric. The understanding gained from this chapter contributes to the re-evaluation and validating of the key aspects of the ‘product’ and the governance process proposed in chapter 2 based on the findings from the literature review, and also highlights some usefulness and limitations of the case studies in the following two sub-sections.

4.5.1 Re-evaluation of the framework

Generally, it is noted that in this survey of Mediterranean cases more literature was found on the product than on the process. Literature on public spaces in the SEMC puts a great emphasis on these as a product, highlighting history, tradition and heritage. With regard to product, some of the three main categories (urban form, movement and use and activities) and sub-categories were used to analyse the product, but mainly to analyse the ‘traditional’ spaces. This was useful to understand public spaces in the past. However, few sources have discussed public spaces in contemporary times, among them Celik (1997) and Salamandra (2004). Also very few sources provide concepts for analysing the process from an institutional point of view, which is an important one, as Elsheshtawy (2004) claimed that whether it is in encounters with citizens and authorities or dealing with various public and private organisations, all play a vital role in constructing an understanding, a referential framework.

These experiences highlighted public spaces in physical and social terms. Most of the experiences have been criticised due to the lack of understanding the social role of public spaces in contemporary times and their usefulness to the communities which use them – even the Barcelona case did not escape such criticism. This highlights the role of public space physically and socially. So the framework would be strengthened if the social dimension (see figure 2.1) were developed. Such development was beyond the scope and resources available for the undertaking of this PhD research, but in order to

address this, the use and activities main category within the functional dimension (see figure 2.2) were expanded for application to the study of two spaces in Damascus in chapter 5.

It is also noted that the institutional approach – through defining the actors, rules and the rationale they use in producing public spaces and understanding how this is articulated into the built environment – which was defined at a general analytical level in Chapter 2 based on Western literature, is effective in describing and interpreting the particular practice in urban intervention in the SEMC region shown in section 4.4.1. However, other analytical work within the SEMC region reinforces the need (stressed by some Western writers) for an emphasis to be put on the wider context in which these processes take place, including how global impacts affect local action (section 4.3.3). Under rules, financial matters was an important rule in the process, hence it was added to the rules of the process, as already shown and explained in 2.3.4.

On the other hand, this chapter showed the limitations in trying to undertake international comparative case study reviews in order to apply the framework defined in Chapter 2. The availability of published materials is crucial. In this review such material often failed to provide full details about the product and the process as information was rather sweeping and needed backing in the text from sources. The framework can be more fully applied if visits are undertaken to the cities that are analysed.

In terms of product, the framework could be more successfully applied through observation of the public spaces for more detailed analysis of the three categories and sub-categories of the product. With regard to the key aspects of the governance process, interviews with key actors and documentary analysis of grey literature could enable a deeper analysis to be achieved. Therefore, the framework defined in chapter 2 is still valid to carry out the analysis of the case of Damascus, since methods used to do this help overcome the above limitations.

4.5.2 Relevance of cities' experiences to the case of Damascus

This chapter reviewed regeneration experiences from the Mediterranean region, mainly Aleppo, Cairo, Tunis and Barcelona, in which the deterioration of open spaces in their historic cores has been a common problem. Each one has its own set of problems with its own approach; however, the cities' experiences, except Barcelona, showed some similarities. Each has both positive and negative results. The cities still face many challenges to achieve the desire open spaces in the whole historic fabric.

These experiences showed that upgrading of open spaces is a process rather than a product. Political support and commitment are two major conditions for initiating the process. After that, the regeneration process of open spaces should be part of an integrated approach, which ensures the involvement of a wide range of actors who have a clear vision of what they want from historic spaces and why, and are capable to interact effectively to achieve the end result. Another important point is the key role international (or European for Barcelona) agencies have had in funding and creating new structures and working methods.

The usefulness of these cities' experiences could be in showing that initiating such projects to improve public spaces in the historic fabric has helped to make some achievements, but at the spaces' level rather than the city level. At the same time, they highlight the need for initiating a wider change in the planning system and governance process, thus to initiate a more programmatic and not project-based approach.

This review highlighted Barcelona for being more successful than the other SEMC. For Barcelona the transformation of the city with its public spaces was based on nationwide changes and governance process, strong community involvement in the process and external funds channelled to the city, but with local expertise and experimentation to draw a holistic vision for this transformation. In the SEMC the process was initiated with no wider governance change taking place, with external agencies intervening in specific projects and areas, in addition to the limited civil society involvement in the process.

So how is this relevant to the case of Damascus?

- Damascus has options to bring in external agencies (i.e. MAM, GTZ, etc.), but experiences from other SEMC which followed this route showed that it offers limited scope for urban change.
- Damascus can develop her own approach within the current political economic and social transition, which opens opportunities for change in governance process, planning systems and community involvement.
- Damascus can still draw on external funding, but with local orientation.

What is really needed is a deeper probing into the process of urban planning and governance of public spaces in Damascus. The following chapters 5 and 6 provide a detailed review and analysis of the evolution of public spaces and their governance process in historic Damascus.

Chapter 5 The evolution of public realm and public space in Damascus

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 provided an analysis of the regeneration processes, including of public spaces, in the historic fabric of selected cities from the Mediterranean region. This chapter focuses on the historical development of the public realm and public spaces in Damascus, including the current state of public spaces in the city's historic centre. Overall the main aim of this review is to advance the understanding of the public realm and public spaces in Damascus and in so doing, answer the following questions:

- 2a) What has been the historical development of public space and public realm in Damascus? How and why did they develop this way?
- 2b) How have public space and the concept of public realm continued to evolve in Damascus in the post independence period?
- 2c) How has the meeting between old and new been resolved in contemporary Damascus in specific public spaces?

Historical accounts of urban development often distinguish between 'traditional' and 'modern' periods, often respectively linked to indigenous and colonial experience. There is an emphasis in literature about Middle Eastern and Islamic cities on the conflict between the 'traditional' urban fabric and modernity. For the purpose of this chapter, concepts like 'tradition', 'traditional' and 'modernity' are questioned here. The most frequently used approach is to follow a socio-religious reading of urban spatial patterns, such as using the term 'traditional' form or layout to refer to the organic form of the historic cores in 'Arab/Muslim' cities. However, this organic form developed before the Islamic era, as the case of Damascus shows (see below). Generally, tradition means customs or beliefs taught by one generation to the next, and this research understands that 'traditional' built form is a form that responds to people's needs, interests and customs.

On the other hand, ‘modernity’ could refer to various things. In historical studies, the early modern period is considered to go back to the period of roughly from 1500 to 1800, starting with the Renaissance and continuing with the Enlightenment – in which reason was advocated as the primary source and legitimacy for authority – culminating with the 19th and 20th centuries. Industrialisation during the 19th century came to mark the end of the first phase of modernity, while the 20th century marks the second in which, ‘modern movement’ in western architecture originated during 1920s and 1930s and expanded during the 1950s and 60s. Though all these events and changes have originated in the West, they have had a profound impact on Damascus’s public spaces and public realm through colonialism, particularly during the late Ottoman period (1860-1918) and French mandate (1920-1947).

Rather than an abrupt change between a so-called ‘traditional period’ and a ‘modern period’, the analysis in this chapter shows that Damascus’s public spaces have always undergone new changes throughout history. New forms of public space have been created in specific periods, through demolition, modification, reuse or reshaping to accommodate new needs and interests, as well as through the expansion of the city into new areas. Therefore, the term ‘traditional’ that has been discussed above is questioned because new forms have tended to become traditional to the people who use them in a specific time.

Having established the above clarification on the notions of tradition and modernity, this chapter analyses the historical evolution of public spaces and public realm in different historical periods. Diverse political and socioeconomic circumstances have affected each period resulting in a distinctive kind of urban form, public realm and distinct dominant features, which have characterised public spaces in each period. One limitation of this analysis is that it relies on the rather fragmented literature on the history of Damascus to offer insight into the new changes that affected its public spaces and critical shifts in public realm that occurred in each period. This has been supplemented with material from the in-depth interviews undertaken during fieldwork, in particular for the more recent historical development.

The researcher used four periods for the analysis. These periods have been set out according to shifts under the influence of cultural exchange, technology, and changing political and economic systems:

- Up to the 7th century: this period includes from the early periods of the history of Damascus up to the beginning of Islamic rule, which had a great impact on Damascus in the following period.
- From the 7th century up to the 18th century: this period is characterised by the prevailing organic form and local regulations and rules.
- From the 18th century up to independence: this period was marked by the European impact and the first impacts of modernity on Damascus.
- Post independence up to present day: in this period Damascus gained its political independence and its public space and public realm have gone through new changes.



Figure 5.1 Geographic location of Damascus.

Source: adapted by the researcher from Hinnebusch (2001).



Figure 5.2 Key geographic features around Damascus.
Source: www.googleearthmap.com.

Damascus, the capital of Syria, with a population of 4.5 million inhabitants, is located in the South of Syria (see Fig. 5.1). From a geographic point of view, the urban area of Damascus is defined by three main elements: *Kassioun* Mountain; *Barada* River; and *al Ghouta* (agricultural land surrounding the city) (see Fig. 5.2). The elevation of the city of about 625 to 850 metres above sea level gives it moderate climatic conditions during autumn and spring and relatively hot summers and cold winters. The low annual average rainfall of about 230 mm and surrounding desert provide low humidity levels and most of the strong wind comes from the northwest direction (JICA, 1999).

5.2 Historical development of public realm and public spaces in Damascus

This section addresses the following questions:

- 2a) What has been the historical development of public space and public realm in Damascus? How and why did they develop this way?
- 2b) How have public space and the concept of public realm continued to evolve in Damascus in the post independence period?

5.2.1 Up to the 7th century

Damascus became the capital of the Aramaic Kingdom in 980BC and continued as a capital since that time for different civilizations and kingdoms. Damascus was ruled by the Assyrians from 734 BC, then Chaldeans and then Persian from 538 BC. After the Persian rule ended a series of external interventions began – Greeks, Romans, and Byzantines – that lasted nearly a thousand years. Upon analysing the history and topography of old Damascus, Sack (2005) suggested that the Aramaic city was located in the area between the *Sefel altaleh* hill and the *That al kanater* area to the north of Straight Street, while the new Greco-Macedonian colony was centred on its agora and established without a city wall to the north of the old Aramaic city (see Fig.5.3).

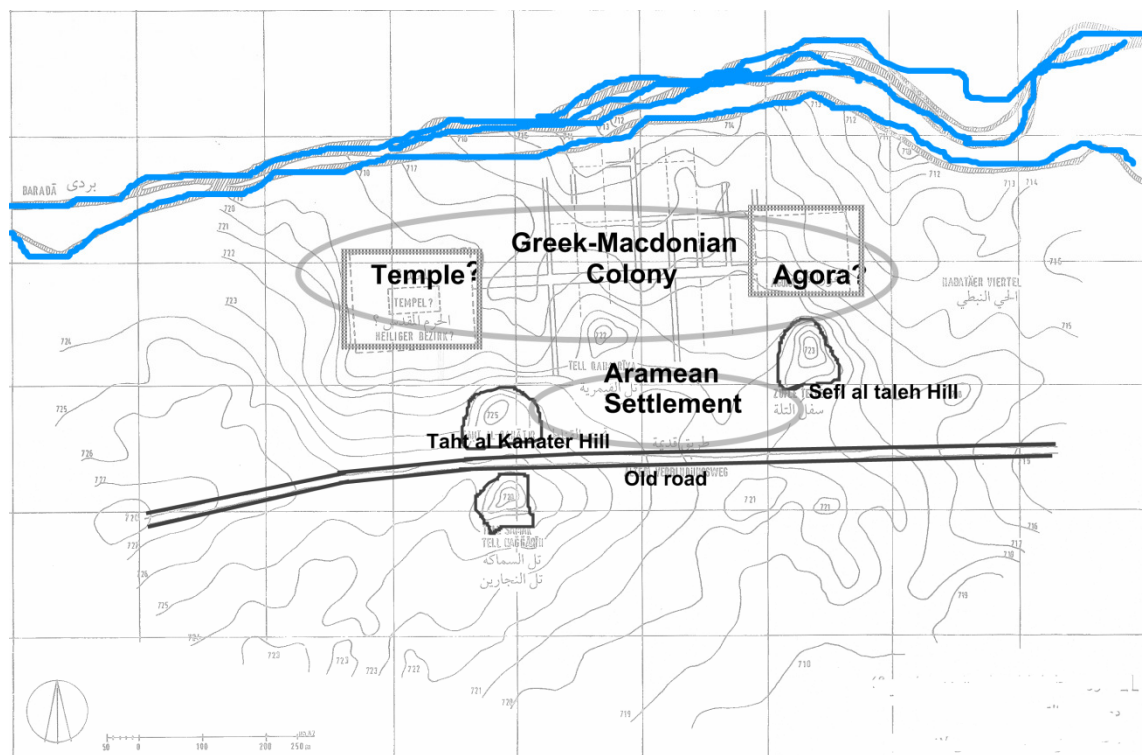


Figure 5.3 The early settlements of old Damascus as suggested by Sack (2005).
Source: adapted by the researcher from Sack (2005).

The two towns then merged slowly and in the Roman period Damascus lived a period of peace and commercial prosperity, causing the city to grow and to expand in size. Roman Damascus is the oldest structure for which surviving architectural elements in situ make it possible to form a relatively precise picture (see Fig. 5.4). The city took a rectangular shape measuring 1500 by 900 metres, with straight sides except to the north, which was bounded by a secondary branch of the river *Barada*. The city walls were pierced by seven gates, each dedicated to a planet. Inside the city, Straight Street or *via recta* was a 1500 m long thoroughfare with porches lined with shops, which linked the eastern gate of *Bab al-Sharqi* to the western gate of *Bab al-Jabiy*. A second artery with porches perpendicular to *via recta* connected *Bab Tuma* to *Bab Kaysan*. In the northeast corner, not far from *Bab Tuma*, stood the agora, a vast rectangular court shaded with porticos on all sides. The agora was linked to the temple of Jupiter by a monumental road lined with colonnades. A *castrum* (fort) was also built in the northeast corner of the city (Degeorge, 2004; Al Sayyad, 1992; *Al-Rihawi*, 1970).

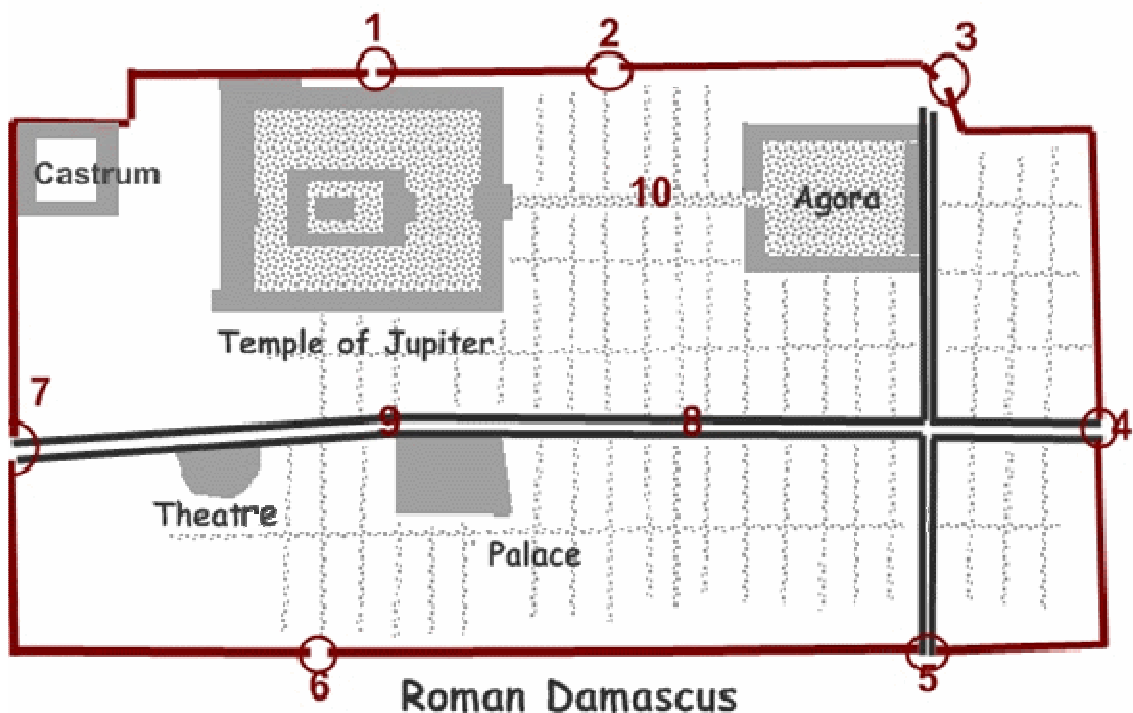


Figure 5.4 Plan of Roman Damascus, showing the gates, agora and the temple.

Source: Degeorge, 2004 (redrawn by the researcher).

1 Bab al-Faradis. 2 Bab al-Jiniq. 3 Bah Tuma. 4 Bab al-Sharqi. 4 Bab Kaysan. 6 Bab al-Seghir 7 Bab al-Jabiya. 8 Straight Street (Via recta). 9 Arch. 10 Street with porticos linking the temple to the agora.

Greeks and Roman cities were characterised by paved and straight streets to provide for movement and safety, and were used by horse-drawn carriages. They also contained buildings and open spaces which used for participatory sport and cultural activities, such as the theatre and the agora, which were built to provide convenient and notable centres for public life (Morris, 1994; Mumford, 1970 cited in Carr *et al.*, 1992). The agora was a place in which economic, political and cultural activities were performed alongside each other, acting as an interactive platform for the social life of the city (Madanipour, 2003).

During the Byzantine epoch which started in 395 A.D., when Damascus became a part of the Byzantine Empire, the Greco–Roman urban structure began to turn organic. Straight Street was slowly invaded by kiosks. The Christian church as a building type was introduced to Damascus by turning the temple of Jupiter into the Church of St. John the Baptist and many churches were constructed during this period. According to Sack (2005) and *al Rihawi* (1970), around 14 churches existed in Damascus during the Byzantine rule.

5.2.2 From the 7th century up to the 18th century

This period started when Muslim armies took possession of the city in 635 and Damascus became the capital of the *Umayyad* Empire (635-750). Damascus suffered from war and destruction during *Abbasien* (750-968) and *Fatimid* (968-1075) rule. Damascus enjoyed security and safety during *Ayyubid* period (1174-1259) and new suburbs appeared outside the city walls, such as *Al-Salihiyya* on the slope of *Kassion* mountain in the northwest of the city, as a result of a massive influx of immigrants from Jerusalem who had taken refuge in Damascus, *Al Uqayba* in the north of the city and *hekr Al semak* in the west of the old city. Although Cairo was the capital of the *Mameluk* state (1259-1516), Damascus kept its glory and became one of the biggest and most important cities of the state – arts, trade and craft industry contributed to its enduring importance. Suburbs continued to grow as a result of population growth and economic prosperity, with Damascus benefiting from its strategic location as the essential meeting place before the annual holy hajj pilgrimage to Medina and Mecca. This helped Damascus to

benefit from a regular flow of exchange of goods and crafts (Degeorge, 2004) (see Fig. 5.5).

In 1516, Damascus became the largest Syrian province (*wilaya*) of the Ottoman Empire following the victory of Ottoman Sultan Selim I over the *Mameluks*. The Ottoman domination lasted for four centuries (1516–1920) in which Damascus entered a prolonged decline under a succession of incompetent sultans. Urban development took place at a lower rate than in *Mameluk* times, and often through constructing religious complexes outside the city walls. The 16th to the 18th centuries were marked by Damascus' slow continued slippage from the world stage until the arrival of Napoleon's Expedition to Egypt in 1798. From here onwards European influence began to affect the whole region and set off a new wave of European impact, setting the stage for transition from an Islamic political economic era to one affected by European interference, which is discussed in the following section.

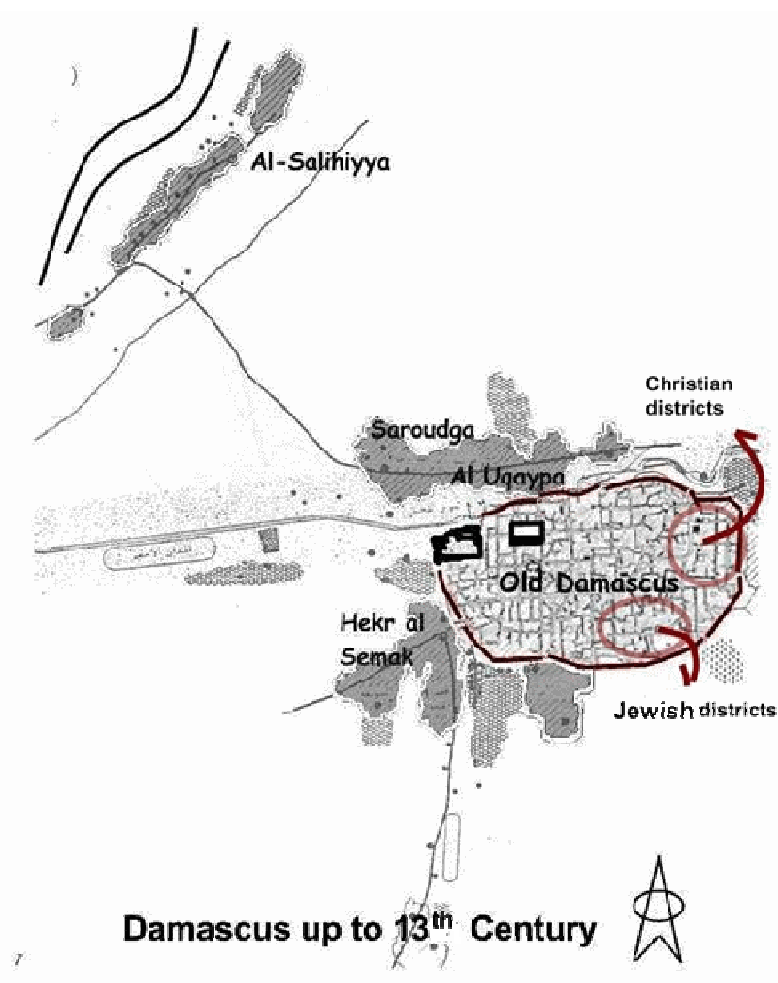


Figure 5.5 The historic fabric (organic form) of Damascus up to the 13th century was mostly contained within the wall, with some small districts located outside the wall in the north, west and southern areas.

Source: adapted by the researcher from *al Rihawi* (1970).

Public space and public realm evolved during the different stages of this period described above. The organic urban form which had started to develop during the Byzantine era became the dominant morphology – up to 18th century – with distinct architectural elements that reflect the religious and military functions as well as the social, cultural and environmental factors which developed responding to people's needs. Because of the growth that the city witnessed, this organic form existed not only within the city walls but also expanded into some suburbs outside the city walls. Before going on to analyse public space within this form, the role of Islam in shaping it is discussed.

Two arguments about the role of Islam have been noted in the literature about Middle Eastern cities. Some authors have stressed the importance of Islam as having the major role in the transformation of Damascus's historic fabric during this period. E.g. Bianca (1981, p.36) noted that "Islam is not merely an abstract religious faith, but it implies an entire social order and a set of rules of conduct which virtually encompasses all aspects of daily life. Without this practical application Islam loses part of its meaning".

Others have questioned 'the Islamic city model' arguing that there are great similarities between the Islamic city and cities in medieval Europe, which has led to saying that similar economic factors led to specific city forms (Abu-Lughod, 1993). On the other hand, Al Sayyad (1992) argued that the Islamic city should be termed the colonial city of Islam, since Muslims engaged in forms of colonialism in the newly conquered cities.

The review in this chapter focuses on the changes and transformation of public spaces and public realm which happened in each period (as stated above) under different factors and forces. Islam is one of the factors that played a great role in shaping public space and realm in a specific historical period, but the researcher agrees with Elsheshtawy (2004) and Salamandra (2004) that the concept of Islamic city is less useful to study the contemporary Eastern Mediterranean city and its people. This research emphasised the city's unique public spaces and concerns on the one hand, and the problems and issues it shares with much of the urbanised world on the other. The shape and nature of the city's public spaces is determined by the different actors involved in the governance process of these public spaces.

At the city level, the agora and theatre, which were two important symbols of civic public life during the Roman and Greek period, had disappeared. The Church of St. John

the Baptist was transformed to become the most significant element of the urban fabric – the great Umayyad Mosque – which was the centre of politico-religious life and to this day holds a prominent position in Islamic theology. The *Via Recta* which is representative of the civic pride of Roman civilisation, and symbols of the central authority in the provincial town had lost its meaning. Thus the available space in the shaded lateral arcades and in the central traffic lanes was gradually filled in and used by merchants who started erecting booths along the main pedestrian routes – first as temporary, then as permanent structures (see Figs. 5.6 & 5.7). This process produced a number of narrow pedestrian lanes framed by shops and finally strengthened the typology of the classical urban *suqs* (Bianca, 2000).

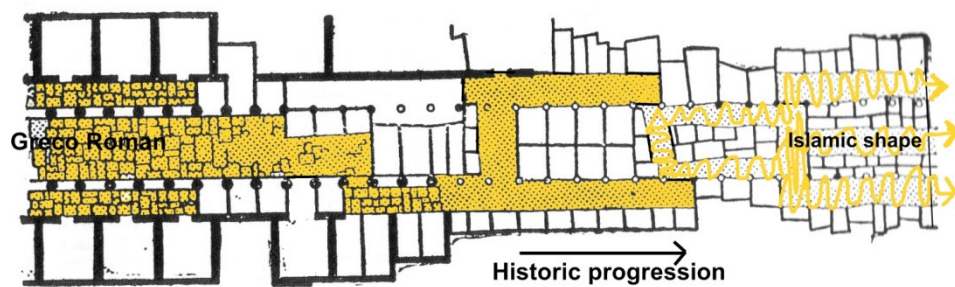


Figure 5.6 The 'Islamic' urban form of the *Suq*, which illustrates the evolution of 'Islamic' form from Greco-Roman origins.

Source: adapted by the researcher from Morris (1994, p.390).

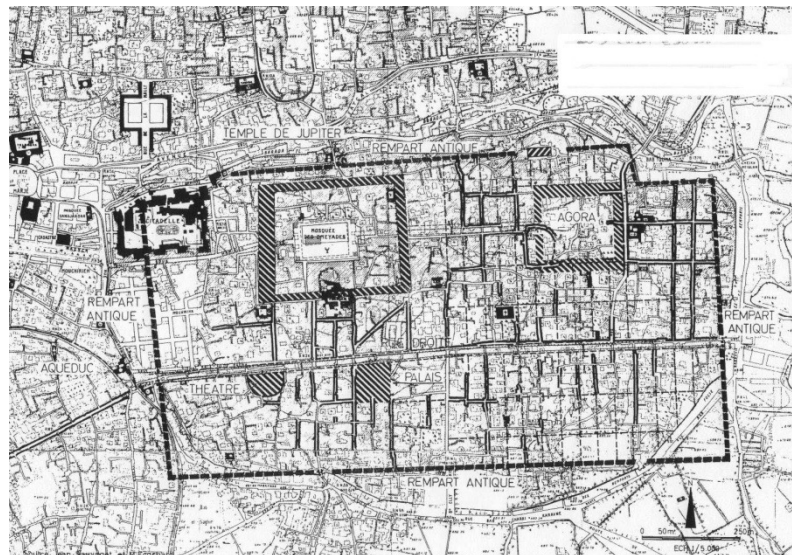


Figure 5.7 The historic city of Damascus shows the organic growth of streets with the gridiron plan. The historic city of Damascus shows the growth of organic street and culs-de-sac layouts which gradually modified the pre-existing gridiron plan, the residual influence of which can still be seen, especially in the retained line of the main east-west axis – The Street called Straight *Via recta*.

Source: Damascus Governorate.

The organic form was clusters of neighbourhoods whose population gathered according to tribal, ethnic, professional, familial and religious factors. The urban neighbourhood as a unit of social and spatial organisation played an important role, both in understanding old Damascus city and in transforming it. The historic fabric was a mix of Muslim, Christian and Jewish neighbourhoods.

At the neighbourhood level, the primary unit of the form was the courtyard house (two storeys) which gathered to form clusters around the narrow alleys. These clusters, which are parts of the neighbourhood, are called districts or *hara* (*harat*) or sometimes *mahalla*. The house may contain from one courtyard to 3-4 courtyards, as was the case in rich families' houses (Sack, 2005). The courtyard patio accounts for about one-third of the surface area of a residential building (Moaz, 1998).

The courtyard house demonstrates a perfect response to the living conditions with local building materials and appropriate techniques of climate control (see Fig. 5.8). The primary function of the courtyard is to regulate the temperature: in summer it forms a reservoir in which the cool night air accumulates; in winter it helps to heat the rooms to the north. This function is aided by internal vegetation, a further source of shade and freshness, and especially by the constant presence of water, which lowers the temperature and releases moisture into the air by evaporating (Morris, 1994; Degeorge, 2004; Bianca, 2000). "Using traditional materials and the techniques have limited the height of walls, the width of openings, and the clear span of floors and roofs, thereby determining the fundamentally human-scale, three dimensional aspects of everyday buildings in historic cities" (Morris, 1994, p.12). The private courtyard gardens fulfilled the need for open space and nature.

The houses were inward-looking into these interior courtyards, which provided an open space within the private domain, while they turned their back on the public domain of the street. The courtyard of the residential house is an open space through which one can move between rooms of the ground floor, and to the stairs leading to the first floor. It is the symbol of family life where domestic activities take place. Many important family functions and celebrations such as weddings and annual religious feasts usually take place in the courtyard as well (Mikhael, 1998) (see Fig. 5.9). It is worth mentioning here that courtyards are related to the private domain in residential houses, but can be

related to the public domain in other buildings which are open to the public such as mosques, school *madrasa* and commercial building *khan*.

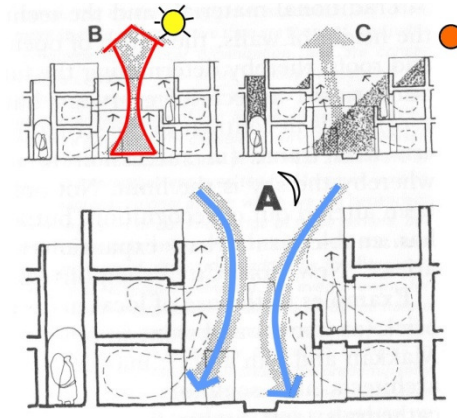


Figure 5.8 The traditional courtyard house.
Source: adapted by the researcher from Morris (1994, page 11).



Figure 5.9 The courtyard of the residential house, private space and realm.
Source: Sack, 2005.

The positions of the front door and windows on the ground floor are two important attributes which defined the physical order of the residential districts (Davis, 2006). In Muslim districts, the position of the front door did not allow the courtyard to be seen from the street and there were no windows on the ground floor, while in Christian and Jewish districts the courtyards could be seen from the street and one could find windows on the ground floor (Sack, 2005). So while there was a strong boundary between the public and private realms in Muslim districts, in other districts this boundary could be penetrated and one could at least have visual access to the courtyards.

Carmona's concept of public space as discussed in chapter 2 helps understand movement space and social space in the streets within these different districts. In Muslim districts, there was an emphasis on movement space rather than on social space, and this was to maintain privacy in the social life of the *hara*'s residents. Meanwhile in Jewish and Christian districts, movement and social space coexisted within the streets because the houses' courtyards could be seen from the streets and there were windows on the ground floor, which helped create a more active social space within the streets in these districts.

Public spaces took the form of weaving main streets which scaled down to narrower streets called *darb* (singular)–*droub* (plural), and from these *droub* on to cul-de-sacs (*zuqaq*) which led finally to the houses' main doors. There was a hierarchy in moving from public space (main street) to semi-public space (*darb*) to semi-private space (*zuqaq*) to private space (the courtyard). Some of the districts (*harat*) have gates which were safeguarded to ensure safe and security and to keep strangers out of them. These sets of streets were of different widths: the main streets were 4-8 m wide to allow two camels to move through carrying goods, *darb* was 2-4 m, and *zuqaq* was 1-1.5 m wide (Sack, 2005). These streets were mainly for pedestrian circulation to provide access and their accessibility was controlled. The order in moving from wide to narrower, from noise to quiet, showed the gradual transference from public domain to private domain and vice versa (see Figs 5.10 and 5.11).

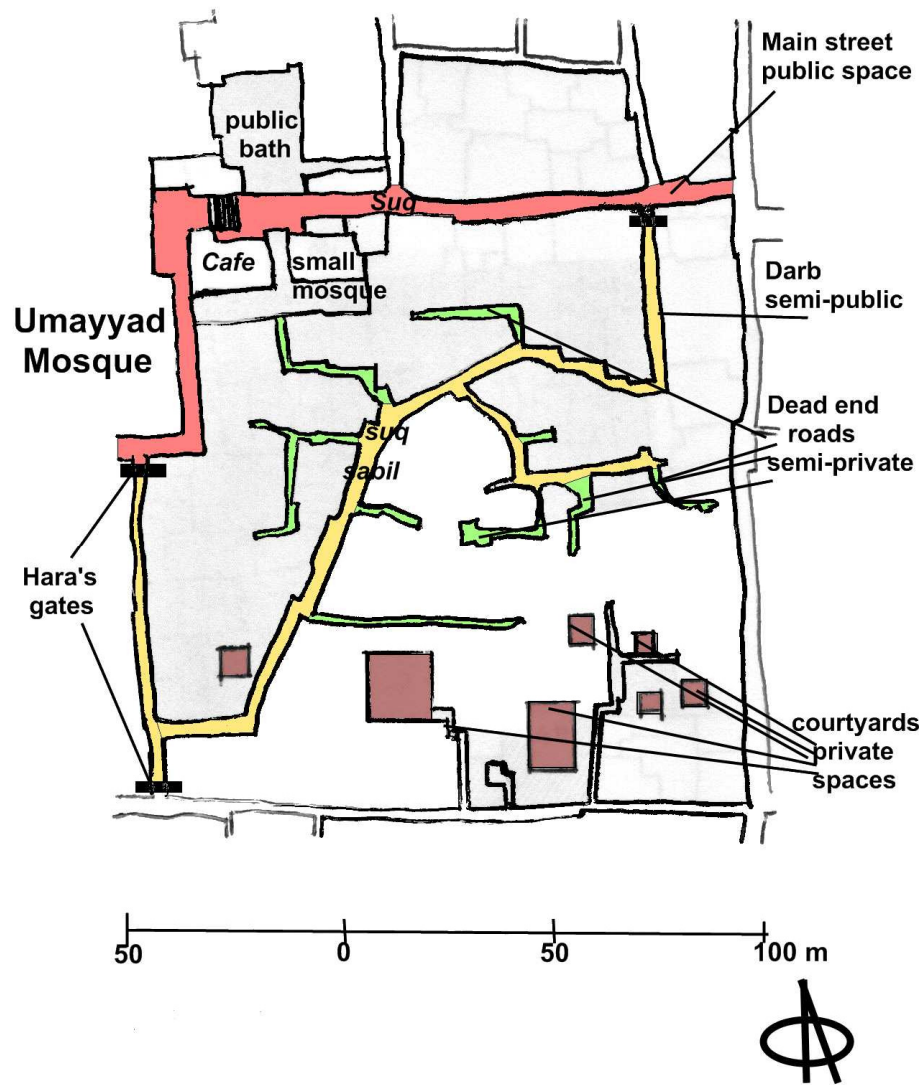
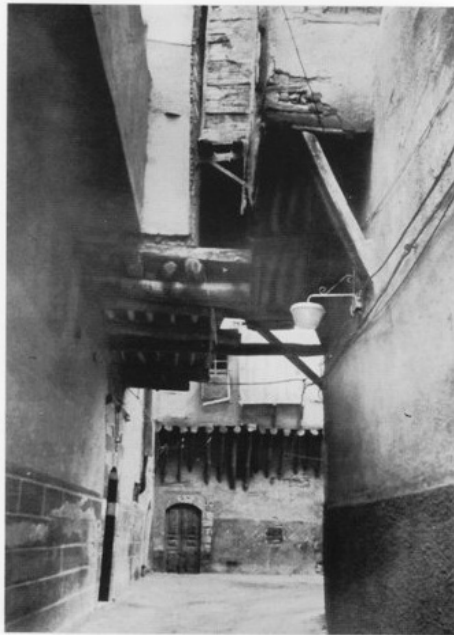


Figure 5.10 Muslim district near the Great Mosque. The *hara* layout and the hierarchy of space.
Source: adapted by the researcher from Sack (2005).

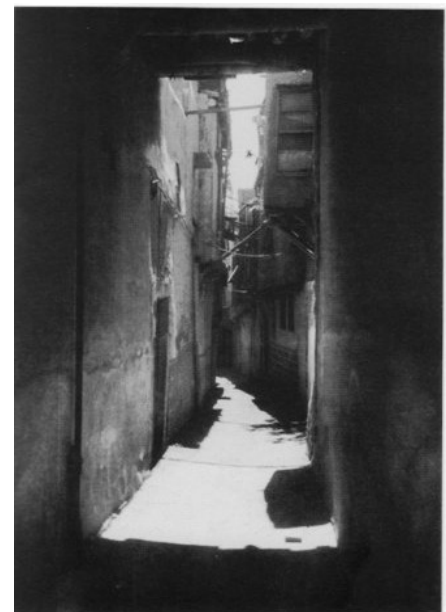
Each *hara* was provided with scaled down versions of the entire range of urban institutions: a small mosque (*masjed*) or church, public bath (*hammam*), café (*qahwe*) and bakery (*khabez*), with a market (*suq*) nearby for all staples and essential products (Mikhael, 1998; Bianca, 2000; Degeorge, 2004 and Sack, 2005). These neighbourhood facilities were found in a public space called *Suwayqa* where two streets met to compose a relatively small irregular space which was usually linked to residential quarters in order to meet residents' everyday needs (Moaz, 1998). Within the streets one could find fountains (*sabil*) which were used for drinking water or washing hands and faces; these were placed at eye level at locations such as corners, intersections and near the mosques and they played the role of landmarks.



Main street in the organic form



Narrower road (darb)



Dead end road (suqaq)

Figure 5.11 The different scales of alleys and streets within the organic form.
Source: Sack, 2005.

So what type of public life and socialising activities could be found within this organic form during this period? At the city level, there was a separation between residential quarters or neighbourhoods and the centre of the old city composed of the great mosque and commercial areas where a certain public life went on. This centre relied on the close interaction between religious, educational, commercial and recreational spaces, was considered as a multifunctional space and expressed the full range of human activities (Biance, 1981). The courtyard of the mosque was an open space where one found lots of people sitting and chatting with each other. Bordering the entire southwest side of the Umayyad Mosque stretched the enormous *suq* and *khans*, offering almost all available products. The *suqs* and *khans* were business places as well as a meeting place where people went to communicate and spend the time. They were also places which contained indoor socialising activities (Hourani, 1970; Daunton, 1989; Mikhael, 1998 and Sack, 2005) (see Figs 5.12 and 5.13).

At the neighbourhood level, in Muslim districts, the small mosque was the civic nucleus which defined the heart of the neighbourhood and established a centre of social communication and civic engagement. This was through its open space inside the main building, often pierced by arches, completely open in relation to the sky. In Christian districts, the open space outside the main church building was the venue for the traditional Sunday get-together. These two open spaces were privately owned and their physical accessibility was controlled.

Other privately owned public spaces were the public bath (*hammam*) and café (*qahwe*). They were meeting places for people to relax and enjoy socialising with each other. *Hammam* was open for men and women who lived in the neighbourhood, but with separate designated times for them. While *qahwe* was a meeting place for men only to spend their time talking, playing cards, socialising and listening to a storyteller (*hakawati*) (Mikhael, 1998; Sack, 2005). The public bath and café were two important places for indoor socialising activities which played a unique role in public life during that period, as Ecochard expressed when surveying sixty public baths in Damascus “ [...], which exposed me to the hidden life of the city” (Ecochard, 1967 cited in Ghorayeb, 1998, p.107).

Analysing the public realm of old Damascus up to the 18th Century showed that there was a boundary between the private and public spheres, the strength of which differed between districts with different religions. It also showed the gender separation in the use of public space and the hierarchy of space when moving between the two spheres. Public socialising activities also happened in indoor environments such as *hammams*, the courtyard of the mosque, *qahwe* and *suqs*, thus these latter indoor spaces fulfilling very important socialisation functions (see Figs 5.14 and 5.15).



Figure 5.12 Al Hamidiyeh suq in 1930s.
Source: Al Shihabi, 1986.

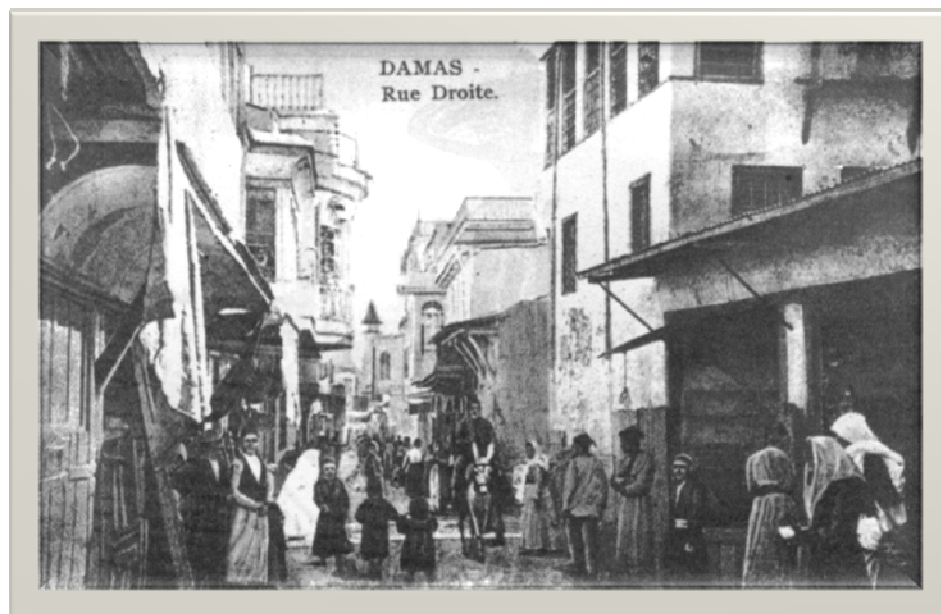


Figure 5.13 Street scene on Straight Street in 1850.
Source: Al Shihabi, 1986.

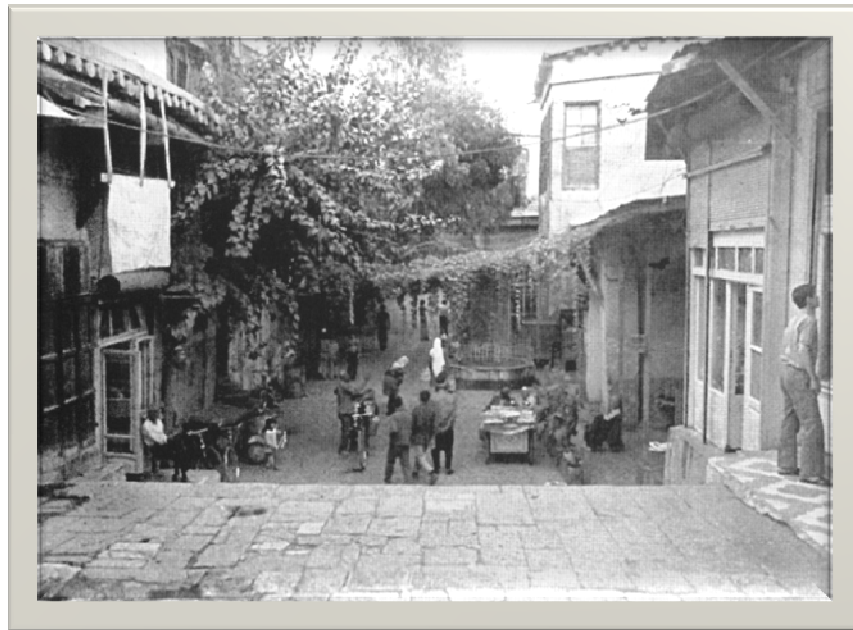


Figure 5.14 Public space in front of the Cafe in Al Nofra district near the Great Mosque, which contained fountain and trees. Source: *Al Shihabi*, 1986.



Figure 5.15 Public space in front of a Cafe (qahwe), where people spent time socialising, sitting, talking, smoking hubble-bubble and drinking tea and coffee. This public space was used by men only, but was transformed in later periods. Source: *Al Shihabi*, 1986.

Moreover, analysing public realm and spaces in terms of Lofland's concept of realms discussed in chapter 2 helps understand the nature of these spaces in this period and the transformation they experienced in later periods. The organic urban form in this period contained the three realms defined by Lofland. The district contained private realms (the courtyard houses which accommodated households) which were gathered to compose a parochial realm around district cul-de-sacs and narrow alleys, where district residents moved on foot and encountered each other in their daily life. Also the indoor environments within the *hara* such as the café, small mosque, public bath and *suq* for daily needs were part of the parochial realm. In other words, these public spaces were characterised by a sense of commonality among acquaintances and neighbours who were involved in interpersonal networks (ties of blood and kin and strong rootedness of individuals in communities) which were located within *harat* and neighbourhoods. These private and parochial realms were bubbles within the old city, which constituted the public realm (see figure 5.16).

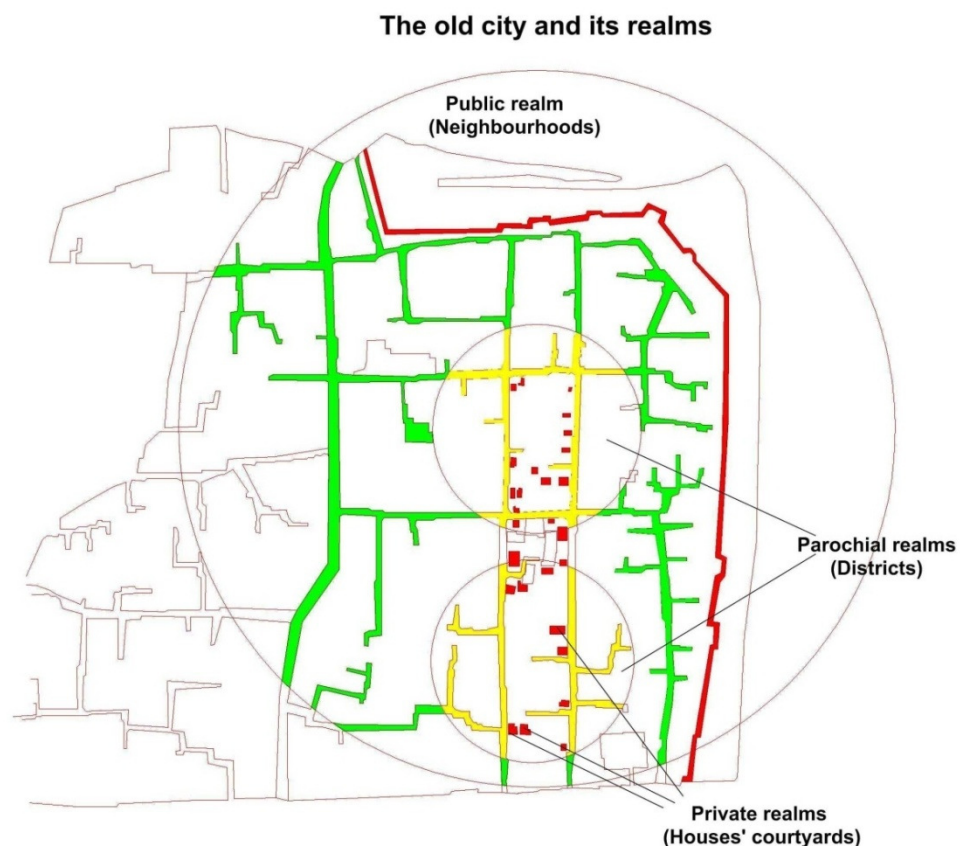


Figure 5.16 The three realms of the organic urban form in Damascus.
Source: the researcher.

How were these public, semi-public and semi-private spaces monitored? By the time Damascus fell to the Arabs the general weakening of governmental authority had brought about a disregard for building codes. Physical order in the city had already started to disintegrate; many encroachments on city streets had occurred (Sauvaget, 1949, in Al-Sayyad, 1992). Other authors considered that ‘traditional’ Islamic society functioned on the basis of self supporting entities because of its social structure based on kinship and social solidarity. Therefore, the administrative and bureaucracy could be minimized (Bianca, 1981). Bianca also related the organically grown historic structure to the strength of customs and of self-evident tacit agreements, where there was no need for explicit building codes; the control of building activities therefore fell into the domain of Islamic law (*hisba*).

Sack (2005) argued that the ‘Islamic city’ was organised on the basis of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Islamic law (*hisba*), and religious traditions (*shari’ah*). The city’s spaces were placed under the authority of a chief *mohtsib* who monitored the main streets and *droub* but not *zuqaq* (semi-private spaces), which were placed under the residents’ authority. When residents failed to solve a conflict, they needed to consult the *mohtasib* to make the final decision. Since the period of the French Mandate, the neighbourhood has been grouped around the *Mokhtar* who was the one who has the power to supervise all the issues raised by his neighbourhood. The *Mokhtar* was appointed by the neighbourhood’s residents to act as intermediary between them and the government (Sack, 2005).

Others argued that because the rules were applied at a very local level, the result was a fine-grained organisation (Davis, 2006). For Davis (2006) the form of the ‘traditional Islamic city’ came from local regulations, based on religious custom, combined with the use of commonly understood rules about building form. Some of the rules came from Koranic law dealing with relationships among neighbours. Some were economic, dealing with the desire to maximize equity and/or rent. Some were concerned with status and symbol, and still others with the position of women and family life in society.

In this vein, Sack’s work (2005) on old Damascus was in line with Davis’s explanation of the regulation and the formation of the ‘traditional’ Islamic city: “The absence of an

overall municipal administration to uniformly administer a statutory zoning ordinance meant that disputes were settled by local judge, who was looking at the actual situation and how similar disputes had been resolved in the past. This reference to things people could understand helped maintain the common understanding of the rules” (Davis, 2006, p. 203).

So organic urban form was the product of applying a local system of regulation and rules. In some spaces such as the semi-private cul-de-sacs, the main actors were the residents, who decided on the position of doors and windows and on cleanliness. In other spaces, the main actor was the *mohtasib*, who was appointed by a higher authority, and later the *Mokhtar* who was appointed by the district’s residents.

Though organic form was dominant during this period, the development of Damascus also witnessed new urban forms. The first Ottoman complex was built in 1554-59, reflecting more careful planning. This complex introduced Old Damascus to a distinctive architectural building type: *Tikiyya Sulaymaniyya* consisted of a mosque, a cemetery (*turba*), a school (*madrassa*), a restaurant, a hotel and a *suq*. This complex was built to the west of old Damascus on the banks of Barada River. The second *Tikiyya* complex was in *Salihyya* and two new mosques of Ottoman style were established in the south of Damascus at *Al-Mydan* (Al- Rihawi, 1970, Ecochard, 1981).

All these new forms were built outside the wall. *Tikiyya Sulaymaniyya* followed the same morphology of the organic form by using the courtyard layout with fountain and trees. What was different about it was the concentration of functions, which excluded residential use, and its scale, larger than that of the courtyard house, which made it stand out as a separate unit and focused attention on its facades. To the west of the *Tikkiya* lay the ancient hippodrome (*Maydan al-Akhdar*). All in all – *Tikkiya*, *Maydan* and *Barada* River – helped in creating a new open space for walking and recreation for people from old Damascus, who used it to rest and spend time while enjoying the river scene: “on Fridays and Sundays, crowds of Damascene leave the city to promenade at the *Maydan*” (Degeorge, 2004). Also travellers came from outside Damascus stop there to rest before resuming their journey towards the city centre of old Damascus (see Figs 5.17 and 5.18).

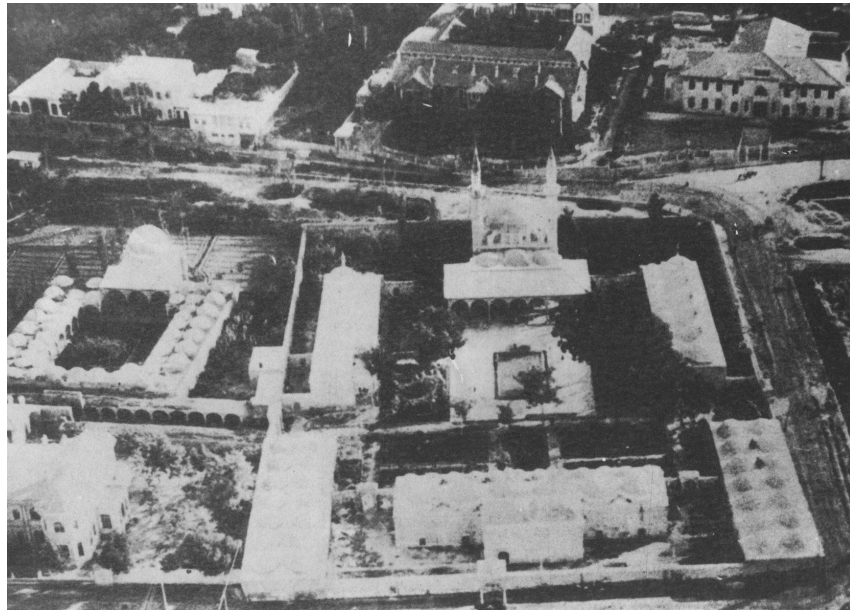


Figure 5.17 Aerial view of *Tikiyya Sulaymaniyya* from the East. Source: *Al Shihabi*, 1986.

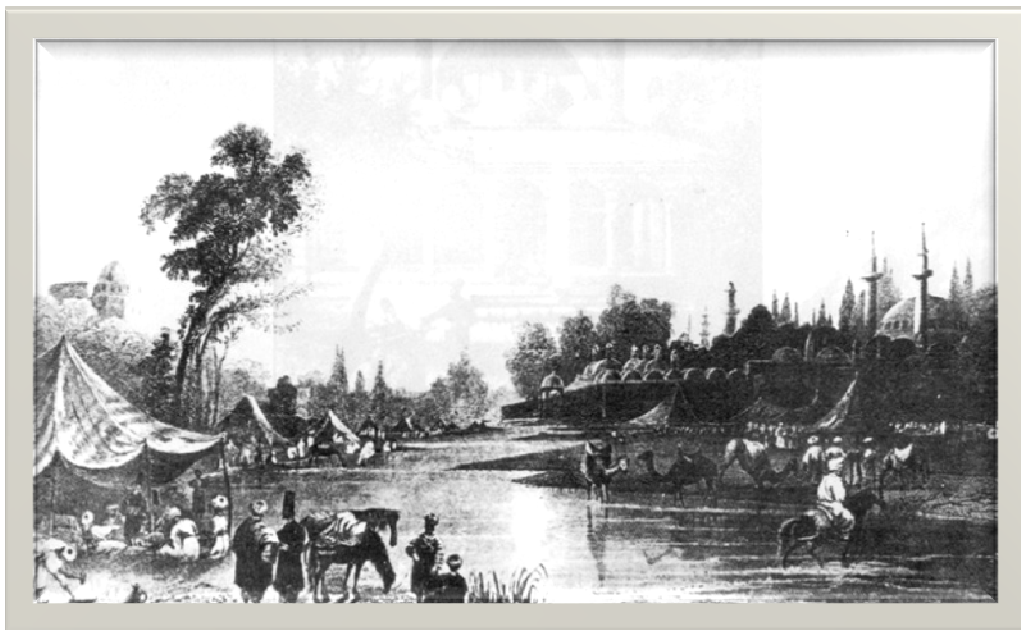


Figure 5.18 The Ottoman *Tikiyya* on the banks of the *Barada* River. This scene shows what was a new urban form in the 16th century, which provided new open space for residents as well as travellers. For residents, who used to fulfil their open space needs space by using their domestic courtyard, this building type introduced to a new way to enjoy socialising in an outdoor environment. Source: *Al Shihabi*, 1986.

5.2.3 From the end of the 18th century up to independence

The European impact and modernity were two characteristics of this period. The European impact began to affect Damascus with the arrival of Napoleon's Campaign (1798-1801) in Egypt and Syria to protect French trade interests and undermine Britain's access to India, which paved the way for European intervention in the region later on. In the period between 1840 to the First World War, Damascus was influenced by the first impacts of modernity through the strategies and visions which governed the mentality of late Ottoman governors who ruled Syria from the beginning of the 19th century (Hudson, 2006). In this period, the city, public space and public realm had transformed significantly and new public spaces emerged like squares, avenues and parks and could be noted within the layout of the city.

The city's layout consisted of the old city inside the wall and an extra muros area which stretched towards the north, west and north. The topography of the extra muros areas reflected the street or road as an important factor of the growth itself. The *Midan* district layout stretched along a road running from north to south, which linked the city and the South and maintained its essential role in the trade, crafts and the holy pilgrimage to Mecca (Fig. 5.19). The transformation started as early as 1840s to affect the city's urban form by erecting a number of stand alone public buildings, which were clustered to form the new city centre. *Marjeh* Square was a distinctive type of public space – where the palace of the governor Ibrahim Basha (1831-40) was built, thus transferring political power from the Islamic citadel to the square. The three distinct sections of the city met there: the old city to the west, *Mydan* to the south and new Europeanized sections to the north and west, such as *Salihyye*, which accommodated the rich and later on was inhabited by prominent Europeans and consuls.

The new square formed the new city centre and symbolised transitions in social, legal and geographical arenas. It introduced new public life to the city; in legal arena it symbolised the transition from the law of Islam to the law of the secular state; and it marked the beginning of an area where regulations were applied by a more centralised system, different from the organic form where regulations were applied at the very local level. This new space, *Marjeh* square, was to centralise future development in the city.

Moreover, *Marjeh* square as a public space was totally new for organic Damascus in terms of morphological and functional aspects (see Figs 5.20 and 5.21). It took a

rectangular shape as an open space surrounded by a complex of public buildings shaped as blocks. The concentration of different administrative, governmental and recreational uses was also new in *Marjeh* square. It incorporated government offices, bank, city hall, court, hotels and post offices. Building facades were a mix of European and Ottoman architectural styles, all to modernise administrative life of the city. This was the period of “transition to architectural modernity [...] The period of monumental and ornately facaded structures standing alone in space, asserting their difference from modest exteriors and hidden interiors and courtyards nested in the Islamic city” (Hudson, 2008, p.17).

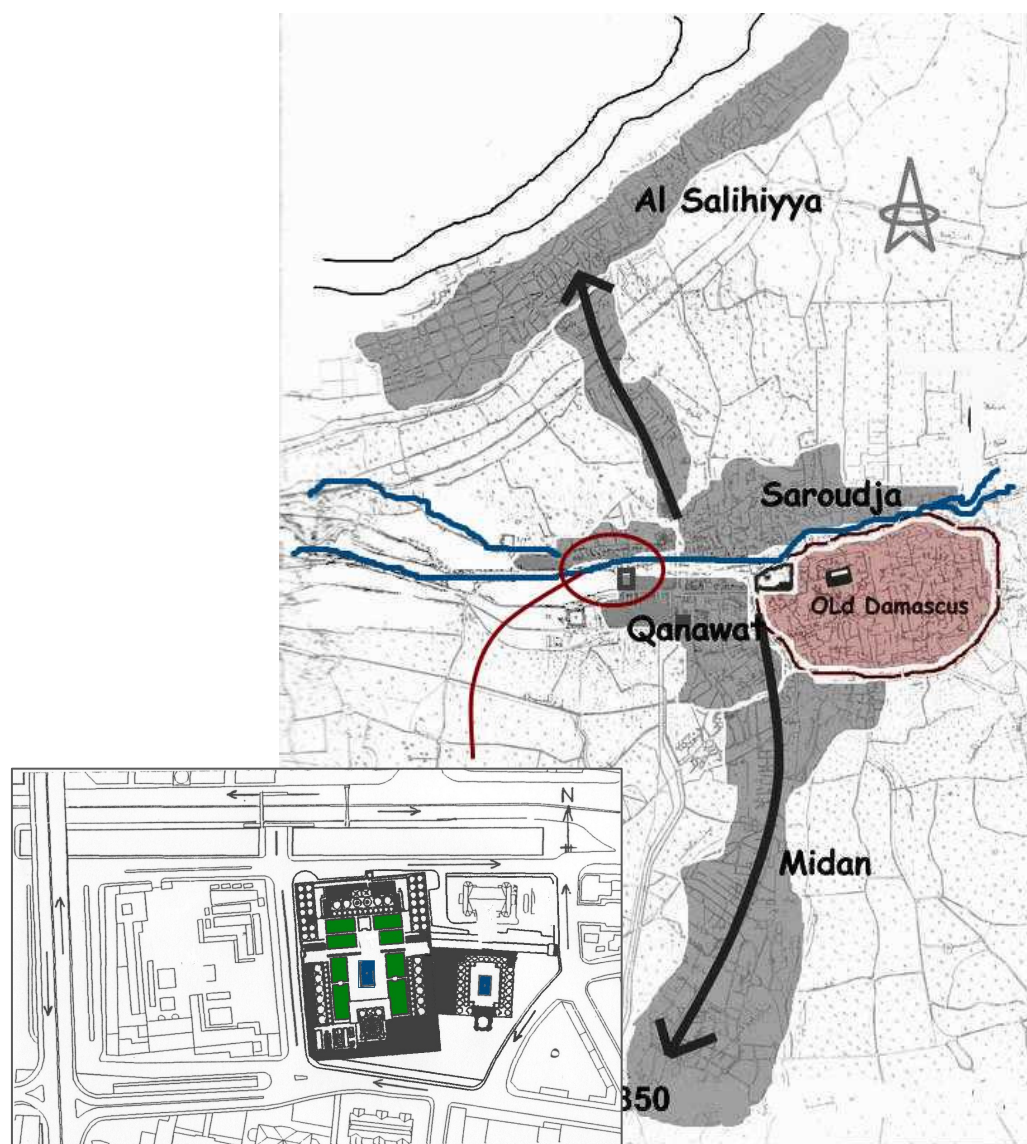


Figure 5.19 Historical Damascus up to 1850, highlighting the location and form of the *Tikkiya* complex. Source: adapted by the researcher from *Al Shihabi*, 1986.

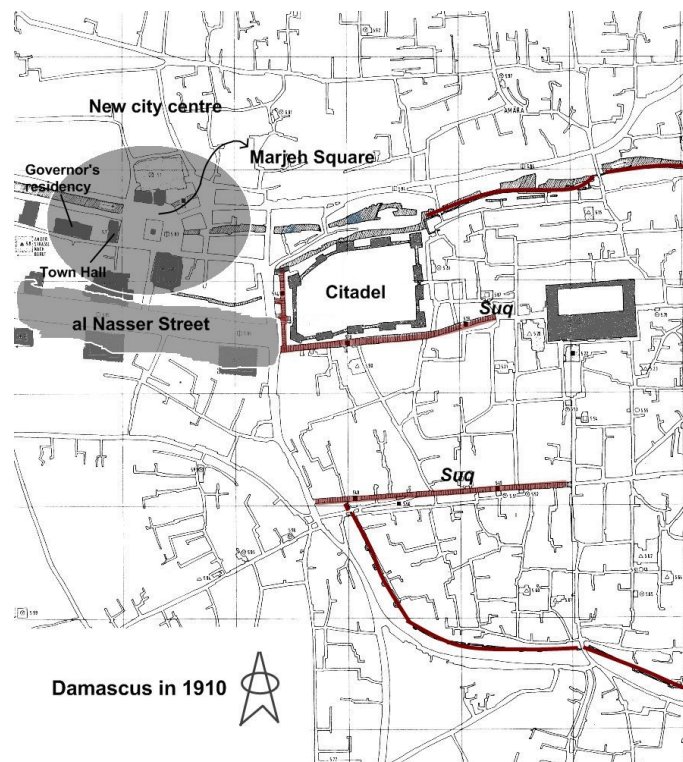


Figure 5.20 The historic fabric and the new development towards the west of the old city in the 19th century: *Marjeh square*.

Source: adapted by the researcher from Sack (2005).

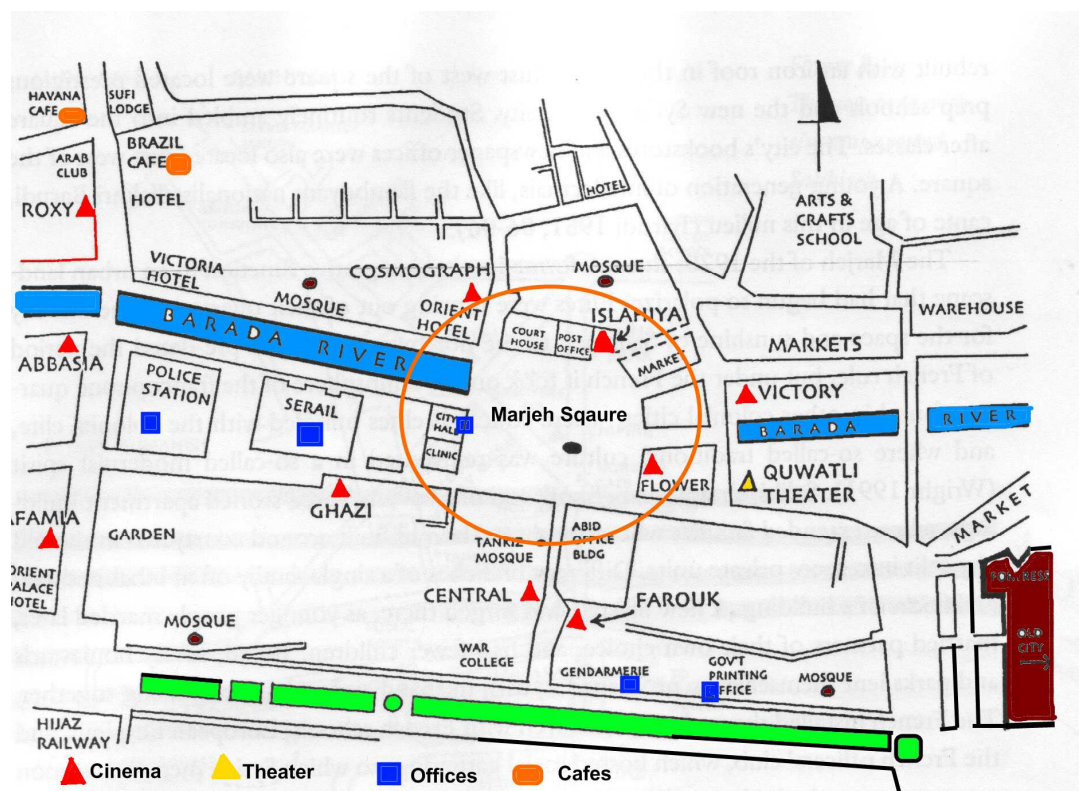


Figure 5.21 Marjeh square with different uses: cinemas, theatres and cafes.

Source: adapted by the researcher from Thompson (2001).



Figure 5.22 Marjeh square in 1910.
Source: *Al Shihabi*, 1986.

Modernisation took place in administrative life as well as in infrastructure (electrification), public transport and communication. The introduction of tramway, railway and telegraph systems connected Damascus to the nearby regions (Hudson, 2008). Thus automobile movement was introduced to public space in addition to pedestrian and animal movements. In 1890, a company of Ottoman nationality, but whose capital was mainly French, was formed to develop and manage a tram system in Damascus for which in 1907 two lines entered service: one from *Merjeh* Square to the suburb of *Midan* and the other from *Merjeh* Square to *Jisr al-Abiad*. Also a new road (current *al-Naser* Street) was constructed from *suq al-Hamidiyya* to the *Hijaz* rail station, which was completed in 1913, with a railway line being established to connect Beirut, Damascus, and the Hawran (Degeorge, 2004; *Al- Rihawi*, 1970; *kheir*, 1969). “*Marjeh* became a communications and business node of the city, with the 1907 construction of a telegraph tower and tramway system” (Thompson, 2001, p.95). In 1907, a column was raised in the centre of the square to celebrate the telegraphic connection of Istanbul, Damascus and Mecca (Fig. 5.22).

The *suq* as a public space experienced no new changes in terms of morphological and functional aspects, but witnessed the use of new materials such as metal. This reflected modernity in industrialization. Between 1873 and 1884, a new *suq* – known by the name of *al-Hamidiyya* – was built at the entrance to the *Umayyad* mosque at the southwest corner of the citadel. Also *suq* Midhat Pasha was extended from the east end of Straight Street between 1878 and 1881 and roofed with metal. Finally *suq al-Khuja* was built covering the west side of the citadel under the rule of Nazem Pasha (*Omran & Dabboura*, 1998; Degeorge, 2004). All these *suqs* followed the organic form.

New cafes as public spaces appeared in the form of pavilions and clustered within the new city centre. The ‘traditional’ café, which used to be located in one of the traditional houses with windows onto the alleyways, took on the form of free-standing pavilions with vast glass facades located within a public garden or within the new city centre. Another big change in the form of public spaces is the appearance of public park along Beirut Street which runs along *Barada* River : “the *Maqha al- Baladiya* or café de la Municipalité was established in a public garden he [*Midhat Basha*] laid out as the municipal or public park (*Hadiqat al-Baladiya* or *Hadiqa al-Ama*)” (Hudson, 2006, p.162).

The ‘publicness’ which characterised the new public spaces was not only in the morphological and functional sense, but also in a political sense: “Most importantly, the beginning of the twentieth century in Damascus was marked by the filling of the new public spaces with popular politics” (Hudson, 2006, p.165). “The public spaces and modern infrastructure provided new venues for talk, new sites of resistance, and new types of process – demonstrations, petition, associations, boycott, not completely separate from but with more possibility than the old neighbourhood institutions” (Hudson, 2006, p.156).

Within these new public spaces, movement space and social space experienced a new shift. As Carmona discussed in chapter 2, public spaces in the organic form accommodated pedestrian and animal circulation. With the change in public landscape and modernity in transportation infrastructure, movement space in the new spaces witnessed new types of circulation: trams, automobiles and buses. The coexistence of movement and social spaces was still to be noted within the new spaces. One example was *al-Nasser* Street, which was characterised by the pedestrian area in the middle with

its rich green environment as a public garden for people to go there for relaxing, enjoyment and socialising (Figs 5.23 and 5.24).



Figure 5.23 Al Naser Street with its green environment.
Source: *Al Shihabi*, 1986.



Figure 5.24 The area in front *Suq al Hamidiyyeh*.
Source: <http://www.olddamascus.com>.



Figure 5.25 Marjeh Square in 1920, 1930, 1950 and the development of transportation.

Source: *Al Shihabi*, 1986.

The social activities contained within the organic form experienced new changes. By the beginning of the 20th century, new forms of public building and new types of public gathering emerged. Cinemas, theatres and public gardens improved the new city centre and the expanded area to the west of the old city – “*Marjeh* square was the first movie district of Damascus” (Thompson, 2001, p.94). People who used to go to the public baths and café within the district for socialising and entertainment, found that a new urban form such as cinema and theatre provided a new type of social activity. In the ‘traditional’ public baths and café, socialising and other activities were between people experiencing each other face to face; in the cinema and at the theatre, where technology had a profound impact, interaction took place mainly between audience and the screen or the stage of theatre.

The ‘traditional’ family who used to socialise, relax, and gather in the courtyard – private space – found a new open space where they could enjoy being in nature – the public garden. One famous park was created near *Bab Tuma* district and other four public gardens were erected between 1900-1920 on the north bank of *Barada* River in front of *Tikiyya Sulaymaniyya*. “Broad, sunny boulevards and parks lent themselves to promenades, with husband and wife often walking together” (Thompson, 2001, p.96) (Fig. 5.26). The ‘publicness’ of socialising activities happened not only in the physical appearance and architectural landscape; but also changed from being related to private space to be happening in public space. A family’s socialising activities which in the past had happened in the courtyard could be noted now in open space.

Cafes also took advantage of *Barada* River’s enjoyable environment and began to appear there. One important café was near *Bab Al Salam* where three branches of the River meet “Coffeehouse of the River, were among the busiest and liveliest, Damascus’s pride and joy was that of *Bab al-Salam*, in the midst of three rivers and shaded by great willow trees. Everyday, in the same shade of trees or of hanging mats and listening to the sound of running water, more than two hundred people would gather there to smoke a *nargileh*, drink the bitter liquor (coffee), or play chess on a dais or a raised bench” (Degeorge, 2004).

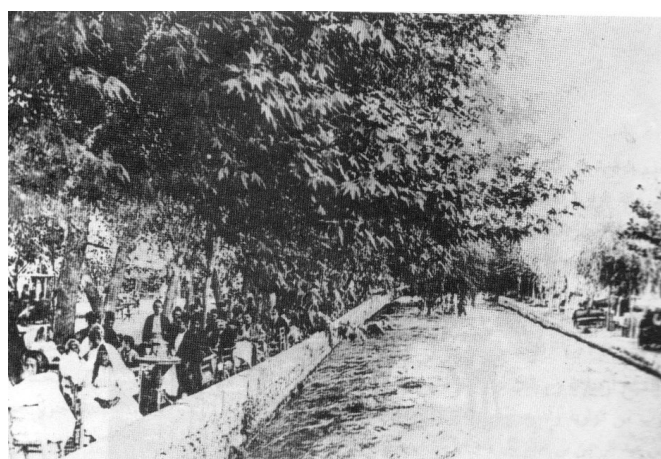
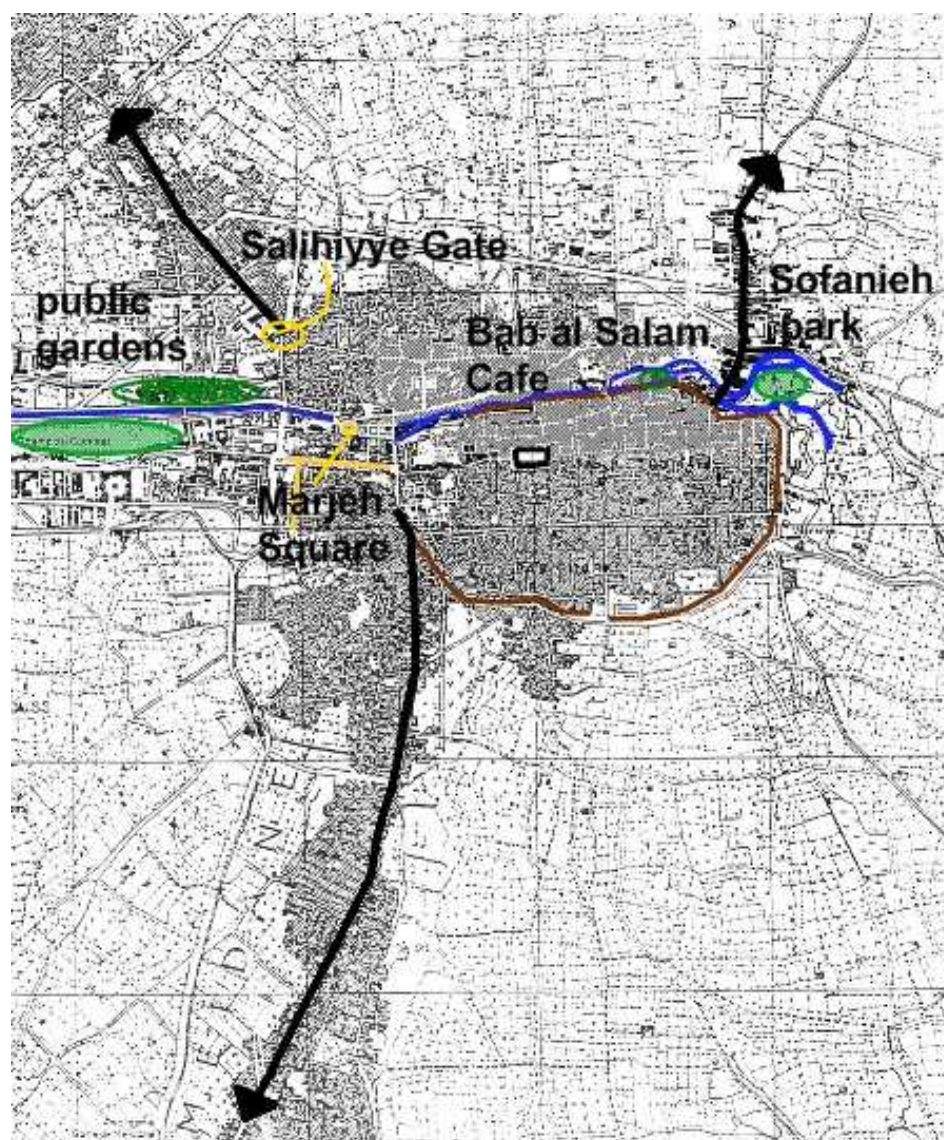


Figure 5.26 Public garden on the bank of *Barada* river near *Bab Tuma* district: *Sofanieh* garden, where people socialise, relax and enjoy being in a natural open space.

Source: Map adapted by the researcher and the two photos are from *Shihabi*, 1986.

The new factor in socialising activities within cinemas, theatres and public gardens was the participation of women. There was gender shift in using the new public spaces at that time: “while movies were first introduced via male-only milieu of cafes, by the late 1920s separate theatres had been built and women and children began to attend them. In Christian areas, entire families would go to the cinema together. Muslim women’s attendance grew with the introduction of women’s matinees” (Thompson, 2001, p.93).

Before moving on to discuss the new changes in public spaces and realms during the French rule (1920-47), a discussion about the governance process in relation to the ‘publicness’ of city spaces is provided in the following paragraphs. Behind this transformation in the public landscape lay the vision of the Ottoman reformers²⁷, who prepared their reform agendas or *Tanzimat*²⁸ and used new tools and technologies introduced subsequently. During the reformist period, a municipal council was set up and consisted of notables from the different religious communities of Damascus and was given the “authority to levy rates for lighting, paving, cleansing and guarding the city [...] and public improvements” (Hudson, 2008, p.22).

The ‘rules’ used by these reformers to legitimate their power in relation to the Sultan and central government were based on the use of the local power structure, the system of local notability, personalities and sources of wealth to effect change. In this period Governor *Fuad* “called for radical changes in all political and civil institutions, based on an open and expansive Islam but emphasizing total equality for all groups; separation of state from religious; unity; and a reformed judiciary, educational system, and transportation infrastructure” (Hudson, 2008, p.19). Reformists’ actions proposed a near total rejection of traditional Islamic architectural values. One of these actions was the 1864-1865 decree which put an end to encroachments onto the causeway, a practice that Muslim law had in general permitted (Degeorge, 2004). By 1920s, the European face

²⁷ The Ottoman reformers were Fu’ad Basha (1860-66), who established order against the local *ulama*, (weak bureaucrats) and European interventionism; Rashid Basha (1866-71), who extended communication networks and put in place a new subsystem of local rule; Midhat Basha (1878-1880), who used Syria as base for empire-wide administrative reform; and Hussaun Nazim Basha (1897-1909) (Hudson, 2006).

²⁸ The intent of the *Tanzimat* reforms which were forcefully imposed on Syria, between 1860 and 1880 was to control the province’s populace more effectively for the individual governors and for the benefit of the empire.

of public space and public realm became more dominant. The arrival of French functionaries and soldiers with their families accelerated the development of the districts located along the road connecting *Salihyye*, *Foud Street* and *Saroudja* district to form a new square. A new wide road was established in the eastern part of the city (*Al-Kasaa Street*) starting from *Tuma Gate*, and another was established towards the north east as a beginning of a whole new urban district. The new north eastern urban expansion and the north western one were connected with one wide street running parallel with the north wall of the old city. *Al-Jisr al Abyad* is part of the larger area referred to as *al-Salihyya* which was home to French functionaries and one of the first destinations for wealthy migrants from the old city later on.

The French settled in the *Salihyye* neighbourhood and established French schools, hospitals and a French officers club, built in European architectural style. This community, which was numerically low but influential in its social and cultural prestige, attracted Europeans of all nationalities. Soon the consulates of Britain, Italy, and Belgium, and certain people of Damascus's middle class – Muslim as well as Christian – left the old city and settled in this new neighbourhood, where the European-style villa and two-and three-apartment buildings were the dominant residential style, with many widows and balconies in the facades, reflecting the shift to European values. Extended families who once shared a home built around a courtyard (private space) in the old city, split their dwellings into more private units, inhabiting several floors of a building, when they moved to newer accommodation in the new expanded areas of the city. This population shift catalysed a slow deterioration in the organic fabric of the city. Many courtyards which used to contain private realms became empty or rented to other.

Public buildings became concentrated along wide, straight streets which met to form squares. New centres continue to evolve, with new concentration of cultural uses, namely *Salihyye Gate (Bawabit Salihyye)* (see Figs 5.27, 28 and 29). From the mid-1930s onwards, *Salihyye* became an elite, intellectual enclave distinct from *Marjeh* with a concentration of newspaper offices, bookstores, hotels, new cinemas and high class cafes which catered for the elite.

Social activities in public spaces witnessed other class and gender shifts. *Salihyye* users were mainly from the elite, which was different from *Marjeh*, which became a centre mainly for lower classes. In addition, the participation of women in different types of

activities became more noticeable: “in keeping with the changing lifestyle of the elite in this period [...] they travelled to schools, and increasingly to jobs, particularly as teachers. They attended charity functions and literary evenings, and joined anti-French demonstrations. They took walks to the park with their children and husbands.” (Thompson, 2001, p.99).

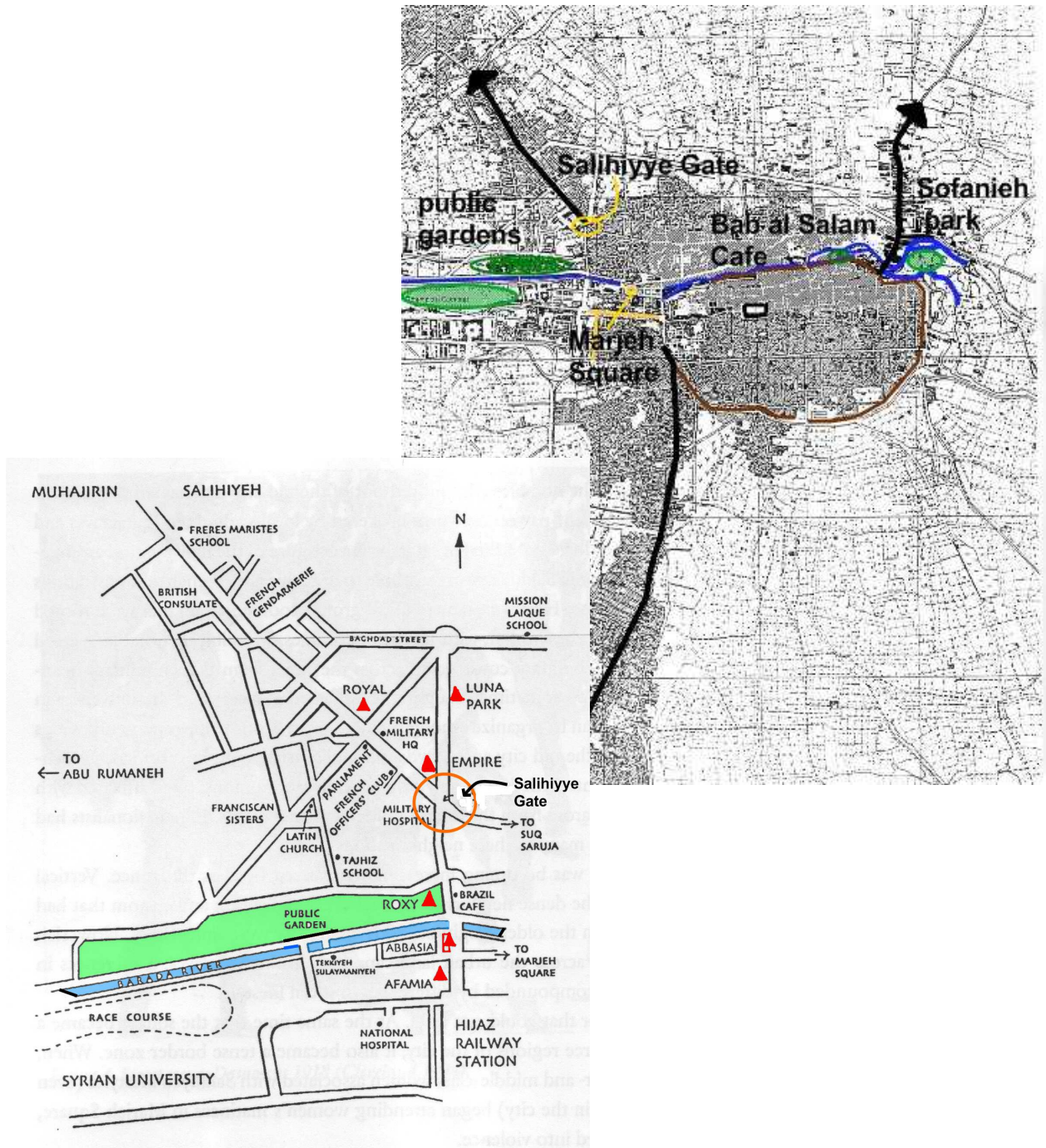


Figure 5.27 Salhiyye Gate, cultural and administrative centre.
Source: Maps adapted by the researcher from Thompson (2001).



Figure 5.28 *Salhiyye Gate* in 1950s.
Source: al-Shihabi, 1986.



Figure 5.29 *Salhiyye Gate* now.
Source: <http://www.olddamascus.com>.

Furthermore, two scenarios of activities, spaces and realms could be distinguished. Residents of a district in the organic form had their necessary (daily), optional and social activities within the *Suwayqa* form of open space, which was full of people who knew each other to certain level (parochial realm). Strangers, as Lofland explained in chapter 2, could be identified in terms of biographical strangers because they were inhabitants who did not 'know' each another in the biographical sense. In *Marjeh* square as an open space which has streets and a layout based on blocks, the three types of activity could be observed involving people who came from the three parts of the city, so strangers here were not only in the biographical sense, but also in the cultural sense, as they were persons who have not met and do not share 'symbolic worlds':

"*Marjeh* was where news was exchanged, where government business was transacted, where visiting businessmen and dignitaries stayed and entertained, where hundreds or thousands of people caught trams, taxis and buses each day. It was also where hundreds of others enjoyed theatre, music or movies in the evening" (Thompson, 2001, p.97).

In 18th October 1925, the western district within the city wall was bombed during the Syrian-anti French Revolt. During 1936 the district rebuilt again and a grid iron pattern of wide straight roads with a large square *al Hariqa* square was created to replace the form in the destroyed part. This was the first intervention through new development in the old historic fabric. Many private, semi-private and semi-public alleyways with their private and parochial realms were destroyed and the rebuilt *al Hariqa* area with its square had very different morphological and functional characteristics from the organic form (Fig. 5.30).

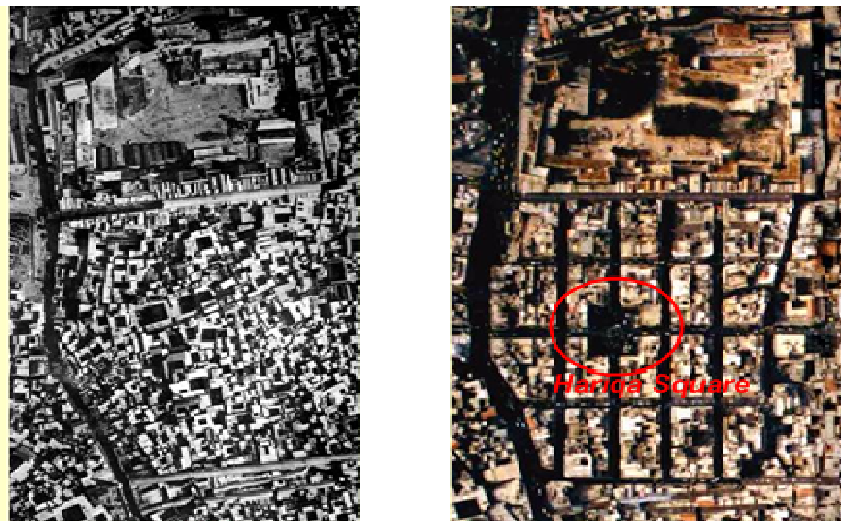


Figure 5.30 the southern part of the Citadel in 1918 and 2007.
Source: Damascus Governorate.

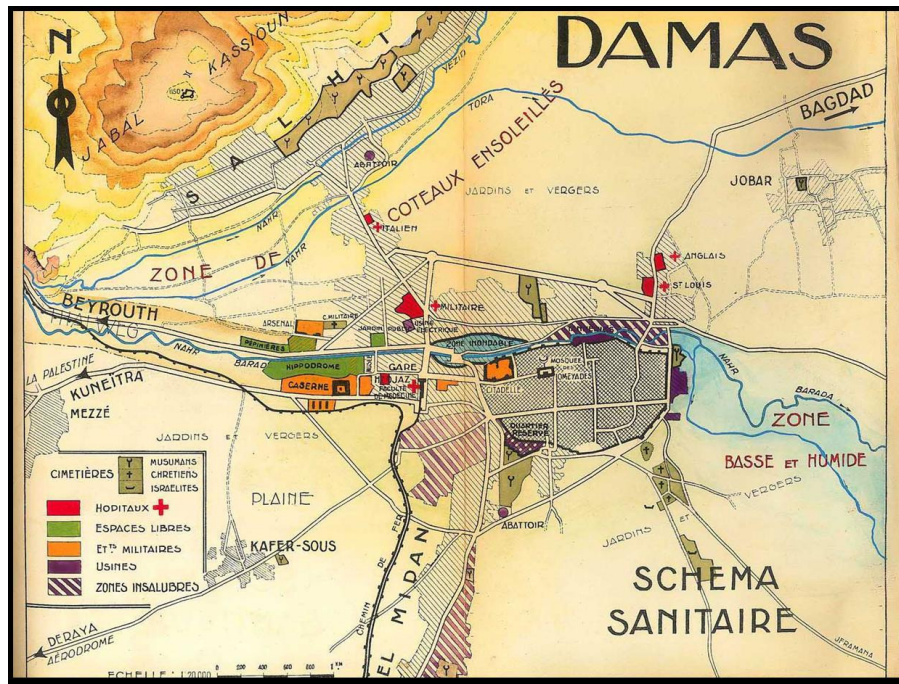


Figure 5.31 Master plan for Damascus: main circulation networks, Project DANGER & Ecochard, 1936. Source: Damascus Governorate, 2009.

Al Hariqa square highlights the first impacts of the modern movement in Damascus. It was built according to the 1936 first master plan prepared by Ecochard and Danger. Danger was one of the pillars of the SFU (The French Society of Urban Planners) and the director of urban planning in Damascus during the French Mandate (1920-1947). The plan suggested safeguarding the *Ghuta*, planning for urban growth, dealing in depth with interregional and urban traffic and to clear areas around certain historic buildings, starting with the citadel and the tomb of *Saladin* near the *Ummayyad* Mosque (Fig.5.31). The development of the *Al Hariqa* area was just the beginning of the conversion of a big proportion of the old city's courtyards to a commercial function in order to create the commercial centre of contemporary Damascus.

In brief, public space and public realm experienced main changes during the period from 1800 up to independence. The main characteristic of these changes is the increase in 'publicness' of public spaces. This was in forming new centres accommodated administrative, governmental and cultural uses and took the shape of blocks and straight streets. These blocks were characterised with a mix of Ottoman and European architectural styles of facades which enclosed these centres. Socialising functions which

mainly tend to be based on face-to-face conversations experienced new change when encountering technology.

5.2.4 Post independence up to the present day

The main aim in reviewing and analysing this period is answering the following question:

- 2 b) How have public space and the concept of public realm continued to evolve in Damascus in the post independence period?

Available data for answering this question was mainly political and economic literature, though this was limited. This has been supplemented with the researcher's observation of central Damascus, and interviews with relevant informants (see Appendix 3.3). A very useful text for the development of this subsection was Christa Salamandra's *A new old Damascus: authenticity and distinction in urban Syria*, in which she sees modernity as characterised by the commodification of authenticity and tradition.

Three periods of change could be identified within the whole period. These are: the early independence years, the Socialist period of the 1970s, and the transition period of the 1990s. Syria became independent from France in April 1946. During the early years of independence, the Syrian government was left with a poorly functioning governmental system and moreover, was confronted by a multitude of problems ranging from political instability to the running of a new country (see Appendix 5.1 for an overview of the political development of Syria in this period and appendix 5.2 for more information about the regional changes in the post independence period). Syria became a theatre for conflict among the different political parties, each with its own ideology, though some of them had common interest in controlling capitalist expansion and ensuring development in Syria's post dependence.

In the early period of independence, during the 1960s, an ideological conflict emerged over how to deal with old Damascus. As one (professional) informant put it, the government was split into two schools of thought in relation to the upgrading of the old city. While the conservatives favoured the classical way of thinking based on the 'Islamic city model', the Ba'athists and communists preferred the modern way, based on 'master plans' for development activities (see appendix 5.1). In the latter approach Damascus was a place where modern architectural theories would be applied. To

discuss this, it is useful here to review here Ecochard's²⁹ impact on the urban development of Damascus, as he was involved in producing master plans for the major Syrian cities. Damascus was the subject of two, one in 1936 and the other in 1968.

The 1936 scheme (see the previous subsection) was soon outdated, with population growth intensifying during the first half of the 20th century. In addition, socioeconomic developments put pressures on the historic city linked to rural and international migration. The authorities commissioned a Bulgarian expert, Morozov, to propose a new master plan in 1957 with an emphasis on resolving inner-city problems in a typically modernist way: i.e. through large-scale clearances. But the plan was rejected because it raised very negative reactions from a consultant body of professional who saw that the plan contradicted the nature of the historic fabric, where houses were inward-looking into interior courtyards, turning their backs on the public domain of the street.

The authorities called upon Ecochard and Benshoya in 1964 to prepare a new master plan which was finished in 1968. But this time, as one informant (interviewee no. 11) put it, "a new Ecochard³⁰ ... returned to Damascus with a broader conception of his field that urbanism should be the basis of regional planning, especially in a developing country". The plan intended to control urban growth up to 1985 with three main ideas: 1) to give priority to transport infrastructure; 2) to safeguard the *Ghuta* by recommending urban expansion over the foothills of Mount *Qasiyun* towards the *Berzeh* sector, in the east and the *Mezzeh* in the southwest; and 3) to preserve and restore historic buildings in the old quarters (see Fig.5.32). "Functionalism and rationalism defined a form of urban zoning in which the segregation of functions became the key concept" (Ghorayeb, 1998, p.109).

Rejecting Morozov's plan and calling upon Ecochard to prepare a new master plan (1968) reflected exactly the ideological conflict that emerged during the 1950s and 1960s over the development of old Damascus, which resulted in the loss of heritage, as

²⁹ Michel Ecochard was an architect who graduated at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1931. He arrived in Syria to do his military service in 1932. He worked as a restorer in the Department of Antiquities before becoming the director of the urban planning services in Syria.

³⁰ Ecochard had established a more global vision – that of regional planning – influenced by the methods he discovered during a trip to the United States, where he met some of the authors of the Charter of Athens, notably Le Corbusier (Ghorayeb, 1998, p.112). Le Corbusier dominated modern architecture in the period from 1920 to 1960.

one interviewee (no. 34) put it. The political struggle within the Syrian leadership culminated with the Correction Movement in November 1970 as a turning point in Syria's history, which put an end to the political conflicts inside the government and established security and political stability inside Syria.

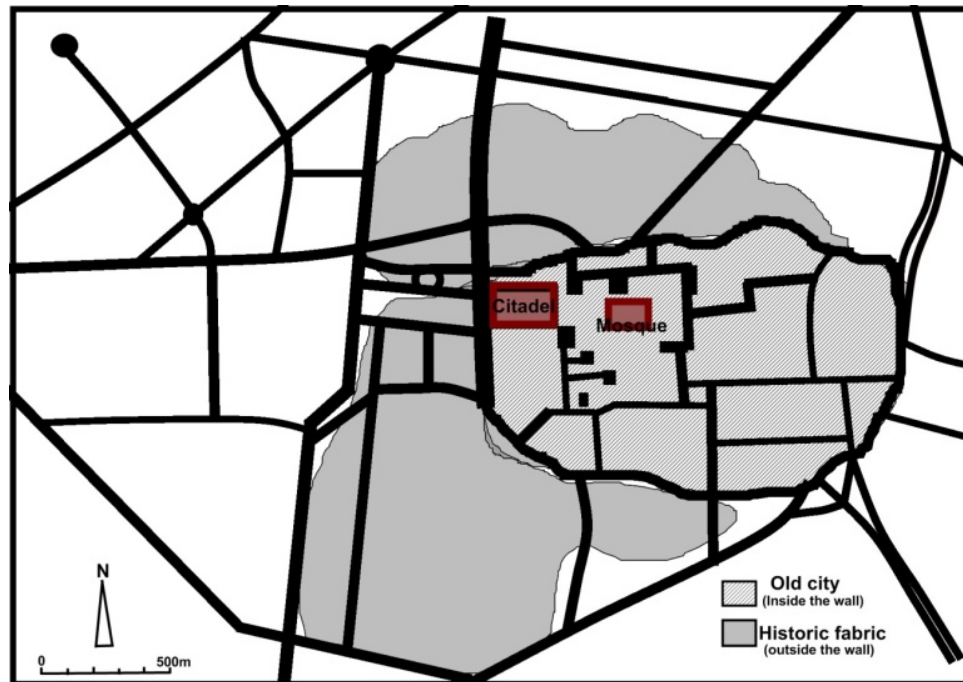


Figure 5.32 Area covered by Ecochard & Banshoya's 1968 master plan.
Source: drawn by the researcher.

The new government in this period represented a shift towards a focus on the 'masses' and adhered to many standard socialist planning models: the economy was to be developed through a series of five-year plans, focusing on large-scale projects. However, there remained little in the way of an avenue for popular participation in urban development. City planning discourse at the time concentrated on the first paradigm that based on a 'command and control' approach that relied on the production of 'blueprints', or 'master plans' for development activities and which followed Beaux-Arts principles in planning (see Chapter 2). "Urban planning, as claimed by Ecochard, implies a strong central authority empowered to make and impose decisions required by a plan" (Ghorayeb, 1998, p.119).

On the other hand, a distinct local modernity had developed among Damascene people. The historic core of old Damascus had a relatively small population and a very high 'density of acquaintanceship' full of private and parochial realms. Modernity, which

had come to Damascus through colonialism since the 1860s, helped in creating dichotomy between colonisers and colonised people. With the beginning of the 20th century, the upper classes among the colonised wanted to imitate the colonisers (French) in their way of life and encourage urban modernisation through leaving their ‘traditional’ old houses and moving to newly built modern flats and style villas. So the dichotomy emerged between ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’. In the second half of the 20th century, Damascus witnessed the migration of rural people into the city who settled in the old city in order to improve their quality of life through finding better paid jobs. “From 300,000 in 1945, the population swelled to 1,700,000 inhabitants in 1988” (Degeorge, 2004, p.289). These poor rural people replaced the upper classes who had moved to the European-style neighbourhoods beyond the old city walls, starting the formation of wealthy areas in new Damascus later on (Fig. 5.33).

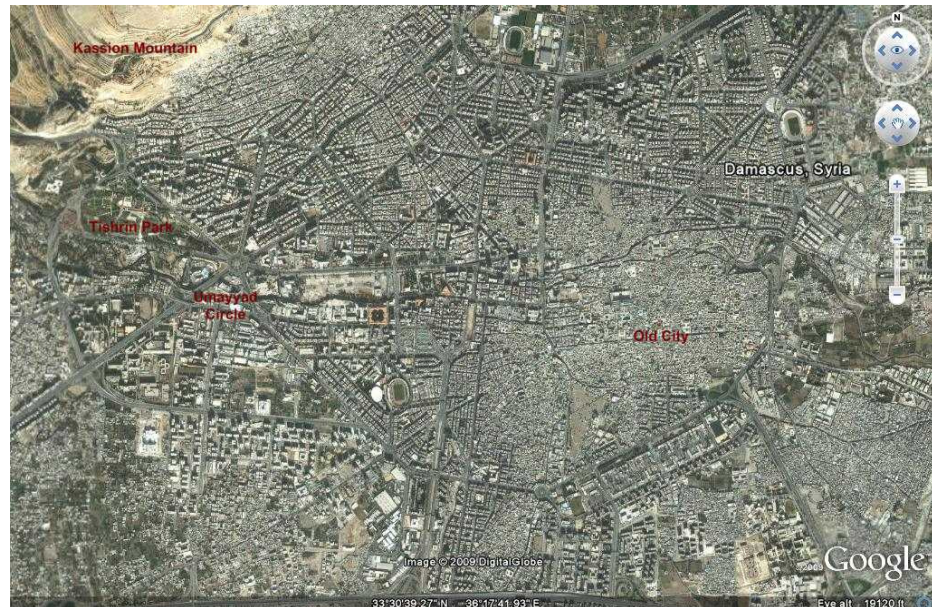


Figure 5.33 Satellite view of Damascus in 2009 showing the old Damascus surrounding by the new areas developed according to Beaux-Arts design principles.
Source: www.googleearthmap.com

The city continued to expand towards the west and north and the layout of the new Damascus emphasised modern design through cutting through of wide straight streets, tree-lined avenues and linkage axes; tenement buildings (3-4 floors) surrounded by small private gardens and sometimes with commercial activities on the ground floor; and detached buildings such as villas. These areas, such as *Abu Rummaneh* Boulevard and *al Malki* square (Fig. 5.37), accommodated the ‘upper class’ and were endowed with parks and squares which became well known:

“At the bottom of *Malki* Avenue sits Umayyad Circle, named for the dynasty at the apex of Syrian – and particularly Damascene – history, and ground zero of the city’s elite. The shooting streams of water in this massive roundabout’s fountain change direction every few days (Fig. 5.34). Umayyad Circle discourages pedestrians, with its skimpy pavements and confusing traffic movements. [...] Around the circle stand the imposing modern *Asad* National Library, the General Association of Radio and Television, and a new performing arts Centre. On its Western flank stands the hub of elite social life, the Sheraton Hotel” (Salamandra, 2004, p.39).

The famous circles like *Umayyad* Circle, *Sabeh Bahrat* and *Sahet al tahrir* were formed by the meeting of several wide streets to form a roundabout which gather around them several administrative, governmental and educational public buildings (7 or more floors). These roundabouts have in the middle fountains with green areas.

In new Damascus, private-public spaces have different morphological and functional aspects. Residential neighbourhoods are characterised by private gardens surrounding the residential units, whose physical access is controlled, but not necessarily visual access. In residential areas, social distinction is based on the type and degree of wealth “In contemporary Damascus, residential neighbourhoods are telling markers of social status” (Salamandra, 2004, p.28, 41).

Public parks could host cultural and annual festivals, a phenomenon which has flourished especially during the last five years. “*Tishrin* Park, host to an annual flower festival, stretches alongside the Sheraton to the northwest of Umayyad Circle” (Salamandra, 2004, p.40). Another example would be the festival which was held in Umayyad Circle celebrating Damascus being the capital of Arabic Culture 2008. One of the currently controversial issues is the loss of some parks in the city centre in order to construct new buildings, as in the case of *Al Naanaa* Park, which was converted to a car park, and also in constructing the Four Season hotel in part of *Al Menshiyah* garden along Beirut Street (see Fig. 5.35). Over the past few years, the area of *Kafer Sousee* has witnessed intense construction activity, and locals now bemoan the loss of what was once a verdant market gardening area (ES, 2005). According to interviews with professionals this is due to the fact that Damascus is facing an increasing shortage of

land for development. One reason is that, as required by the "Legislation K"³¹, buildings cannot exceed four stories. Another reason is that space in urban Damascus is completely occupied and converting rural land to urban land means going through a very complex process of administrative procedures.



Figure 5.34 Umayyad Circle.
Source: www.ouldamascus.com.

Besides cultural activities, squares and wide streets have been a place for political activities. Public spaces have witnessed many public demonstrations in which “gatherings ranged from angry marches to peaceful sit-ins and candlelit sleepovers” (Dick, 2002, p.58). This was new contemporary Damascus with its public squares and streets (see Figs 5.36,37, 38, 39 and 40).

³¹ Legislation K is the urban planning legislation which is applied to the area outside the city walls.



Figure 5.35 Four Seasons Hotel was built in a public garden along *Barada* River.

Source: the researcher 2005.



Figure 5.36 *Sabe Bahrat* fountain in front of the Central Bank.

Source: www.olddamascus.com.



Figure 5.37 Public garden at the end of *Abu Rummaneh* Boulevard.
Source: www.olddamascus.com.



Figure 5.38 Public garden along Beirut Street in front of *Tikiyya Sulaymaniyya*.
Source: www.olddamascus.com.



Figure 5.39 Beirut Street in new Damascus, from east to west.
Source: www.olddamascus.com.



Figure 5.40 Wide Street lined with palm trees.
Source: www.olddamascus.com.

In historic Damascus, particularly in the old city and the extra muros areas surrounding it, different morphological and functional transformations took place. While Ecochard's master plan³² solved some problems it also created some new ones. The central theme of the Ecochard plan was to improve the transport network and strengthen the functionality dimension, declaring that "everywhere significant areas need to be cleared, for various reasons: aesthetic, or to improve traffic circulation, safety, or links with the rest of the city" (Ecochard and Banshoya, 1986, p.108) (see Figs. 5.32 & 42). The plan also emphasised the monumentality dimension when it proposed that:

"the monuments might be easily reached by car, the warehouses readily supplied by truck, but also so that pedestrians might walk freely through the *sugs* and around the monuments, and that all the means of circulation created, car parks and empty spaces alike, are distributed to allow the plan of a given monument to be extricated from the surroundings and comprehended" (Ibid. p.110).

This dimension is opposite to the conceptual understanding of the traditional city layout as noted by Bianca (1984, p. 21), where "single buildings were always conceived as part of a comprehensive fabric, never as isolated structures". However, his concept was applied and the area surrounding the Umayyad mosque was cleared to show the mosque as an important monument within *al-Meskiyeh* square. Other examples include *Al Kharab* Square; Citadel space and *Bab Tuma* space; in which many houses were demolished to display monuments such as a gate or an arch.

³² A contradiction is noted between the Western literature and local literature towards the Ecochard plan. Arabic literature showed that Ecochard was considered the professional who had the experience to deal with Damascus urban development issues, particularly the historic fabric (Al-Rihawi, 1970). According to one interviewee, Ecochard was the one who called for a stop to demolishing the historic fabric inside the wall and to upgrade the resulting cleared areas as gardens or car parks. However, Western author Degeorge (2004, p.291) claimed that, through "paying scant regard to the integrity of the urban fabric, and neglecting the deep-rooted values of a living historic city, the Ecochard plan administered a coup de grace to its unity and architectural coherence".

Furthermore, the Ecochard plan proposed a new road – *Al Thawra* Street – to reduce congestion in *Al Naser* Street and connect the northern and southern parts of the city directly. Implementing *Al Thawra* Street involved cutting *suq Saroudja* district (a northern extra muros district) into two parts. Many houses were demolished and many public spaces were torn down. *Al Khuja suq* in front of the citadel was demolished to make room for *al Thawra* Street as well as to show the western façade of the citadel (see Fig. 5.41).

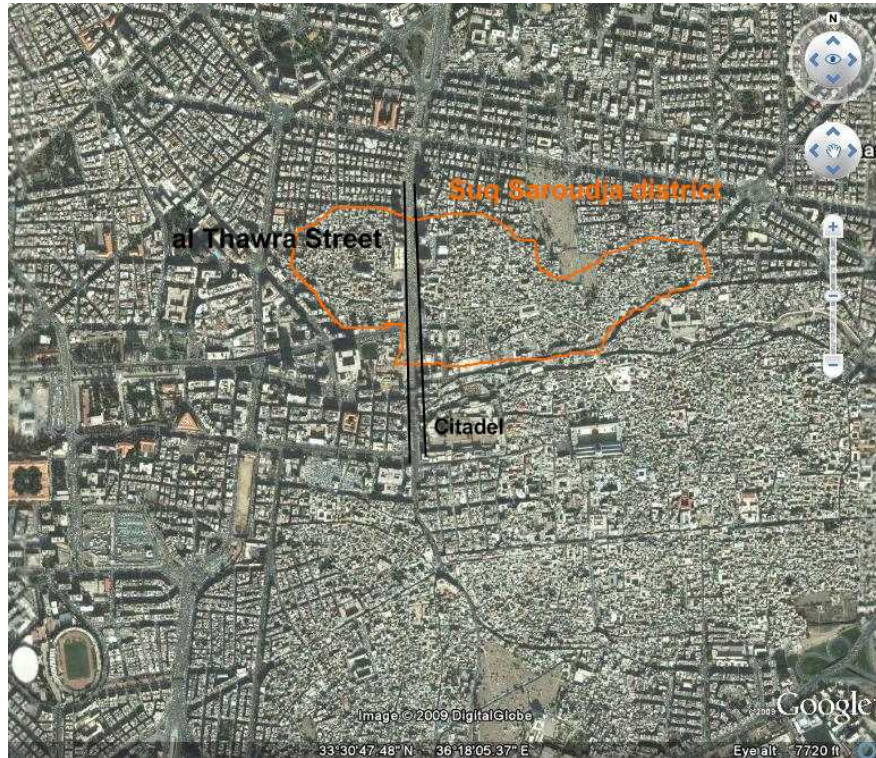


Figure 5.41 Ecochard and Banshoya plan 1968 proposing *al Thawra* Street cutting through the northern district. Source: adapted by the researcher using www.googleearthmap.com as a basis.

Moreover the plan also emphasised the old city wall as a physical barrier through proposing a ring road surrounding the old city. Part of this ring road was built, and some interviewees considered that implementing the remaining parts of the ring road – the case of *Malik Fisal* Street – would be a disaster and would have serious environmental and social implications. In the case of *Malik Fisal* Street, after four decades of neglect, the local authority announced its 2007 plan which includes the implementation of *Malik Fisal* Street as an important and necessary objective for the life of Old Damascus. The project aims at readdressing the persisting dilemmas in the area of the continuous deterioration of public spaces physically and socially, by showing and restoring the northern City Wall; restoring the gates of *Bab al-Faraj*, *Bab al-Faradis* and *Bab Al*

Salam; reusing some of the remaining historic buildings to consolidate the tourism infrastructure; and transforming the area into a new city district of Damascus metropolis (see Fig. 5.42).

At the time of undertaking this research, controversy had erupted over the plan, with Governorate officials contending that the road will ease traffic congestion in this chaotic metropolis, while critics said it will damage the heritage of one of the world's oldest cities. According to one interviewee "Building the new road will help to resolve many of the old city's problems, it will increase the city's tourism potential and provide new opportunities for the inhabitants of the old city" (Interviewee no. 13). Another professional interviewee noted, "The ring road will turn the old city into an island which is isolated from its surroundings, thus cutting the 'life veins' of the city" (Interviewee no. 7). At the time of writing, the project had not been implemented, and in the meantime the area is undergoing a dangerous and continuous deterioration (see appendix 6.5 for more details of the story).

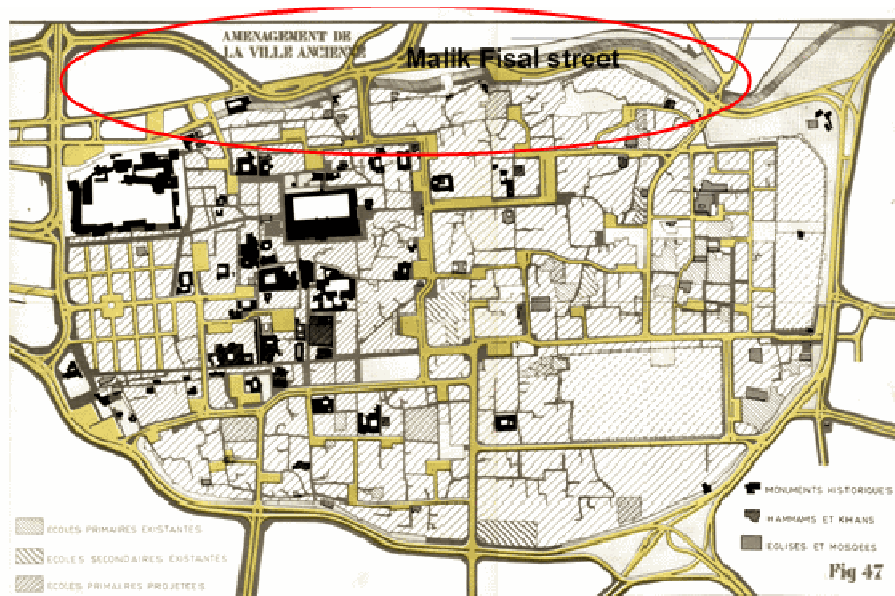


Figure 5.42 Ecochard and Banshoya plan 1968 proposing new roads and parking lots and demolishing a number of houses to create public gardens inside the wall.
Source: Damascus Governorate.

The incomplete implementation of Ecochard and Banshoya plan 1968 led to some open spaces, particularly on the edge of the old city, which need upgrading or redesigning. The resulting open spaces have failed to be used effectively within the formation of an integrated network of public space. In other words, because the transformation of these spaces was not adequately delivered, they have become open wounds in the historic

fabric which are deteriorated, lost spaces that Trancik (1986) defined as undesirable spaces that are in need of redesign. Many of these spaces in the historic fabric are deteriorated, dominated by car movement or used as parking lots (see Figs. 5.43 and 44).



Figure 5.43 A space near Barada River , a lost space which left undesigned with poor socialising activities happening there.
Source: the researcher, 2005.



Figure 5.44 Bab Tuma space, the lost space which left undesigned with poor socialising activities happening there and are mainly used as parking lot.
Source: the researcher, 2006.

One of the open spaces in the organic form is the courtyard house which has been transformed significantly. House owners divided the courtyard in order to be rented as small units to poor rural migrants. Thus the courtyard house space, which traditionally was populated by a single family and was usually a private realm space, was

transformed to accommodate strangers into a public realm space. The rural and international migration into the old city caused resentment among Damascene people towards the impact of this influx: “the people of Damascus have resentment towards all things not old Damascene. Damascus now has three million inhabitants, [at 2004] and of these, no more than half a million are of Damascene origin. The rest are from outside; Damascene call them *ghurbatliyyeh*, the foreigners” (informant cited in Salamandra, 2004, p.11). Based on Lofland’s (1998) discussion in chapter 2, as the population of the place increased, so did the number of strangers, these being considered ‘strangers’ in a biographical sense as well as the cultural sense. Realms and spaces within the historic fabric have been significantly transformed.

One of the functional transformations which have happened in the organic form is the conversion of many houses, *khans* and *hammams* into warehouses, restaurants and small-scale industrial sites (Degeorge, 2004). *Khans* and *hammams*, which were parochial realms in semi-public space located in a cohesive neighbourhood, were converted into other uses including warehouses, restaurants and small-scale industrial, some of these being more open to a city-wide public realm rather than being limited to use by the residents in the neighbourhood itself, but also by an increased number of strangers who came to these places from outside the old city (Fig. 5.45).

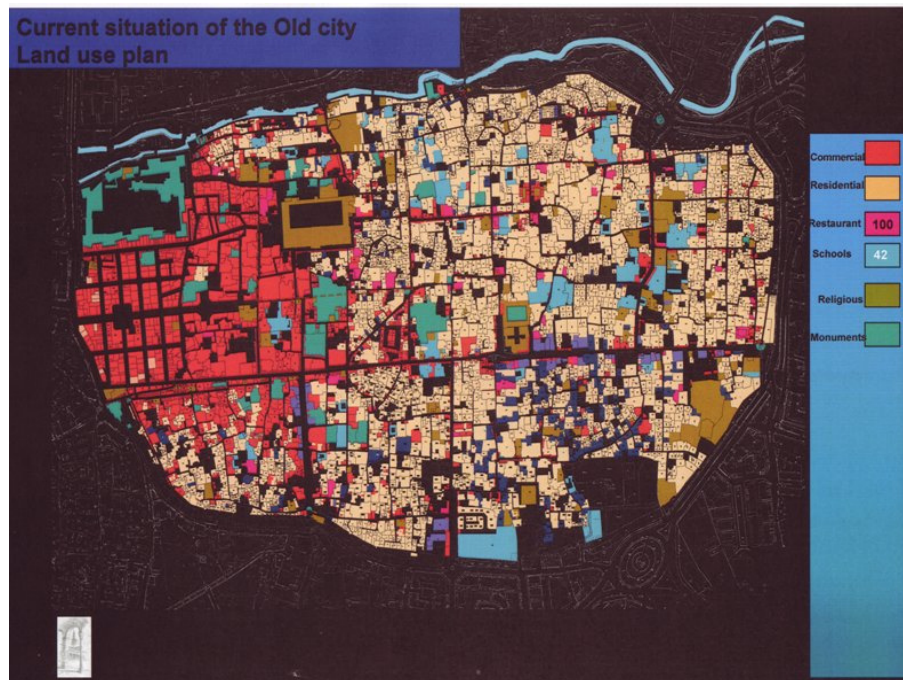


Figure 5.45 Land use in the old city inside the wall.
Source: Damascus Governorate 2007.

Another significant transformation is the break in the hierarchy in use of public space. A typical example to illustrate the changes in the nature of open space is to analyse the transformation in *Bab Tuma* quarter since 1980s. According to most of the interviews with officials in Damascus Governorate and Old Damascus Directorate, *Bab Tuma* quarter still keeps its main use as a residential one (70% of land use is for residential purposes). This is also confirmed through the land use plan for the old city (2006) obtained from DG during the 2007 fieldtrip. So the functional transformation from residential to other uses is still relatively low.

However, this relatively low level of change in use still has a big impact on the nature of open space within the organic form. Figure 5.46 shows two courtyard houses which have been transformed to restaurants already, the nature of open space – alleyways leading to these two houses – ranged from public, semi public, semi private and private, the latter being the courtyard house (see Fig.5.46). This range was reduced to public and semi- public when these two houses became restaurants and their courtyards became public. This change in functional aspects not only leads to change in the nature of open spaces in the historic fabric, but also has negative consequences on the residents' life because of the noise and pollution produced and the increasing strain on open space use caused by car traffic. All of this has drastically reduced the quality of life and was one of the reasons which have driven people to move out of the old city.

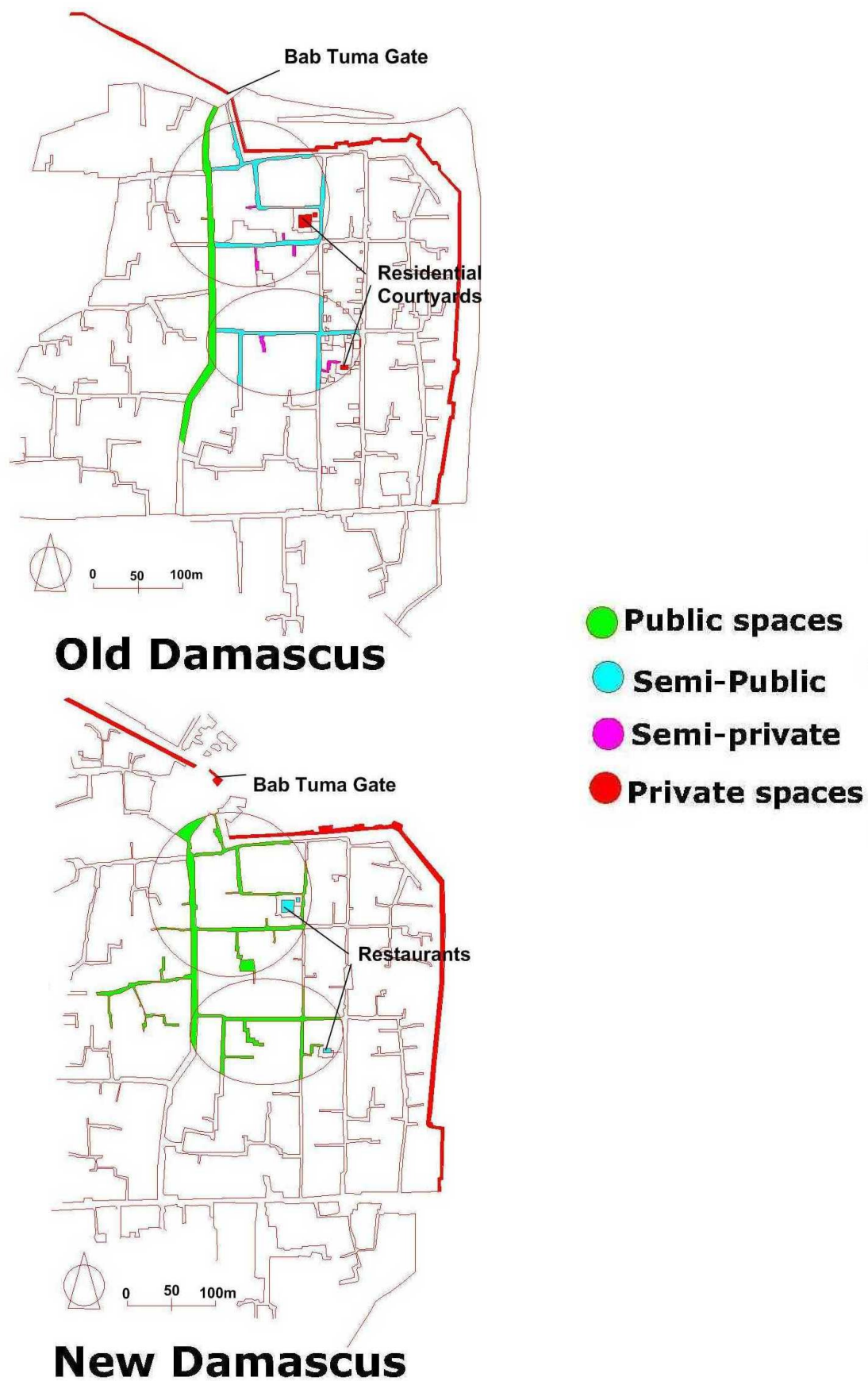


Figure 5.46 The transformation of nature and hierarchy in open spaces within *Bab Tuma* District between 1910 and 2007. Source: the researcher.

Generally, functional transformation of residential houses into restaurants in the old city reflects the advance of modernity through the growth of new leisure practices (Salamandra, 2004, p.74). Salamandra argued that restaurants and other contemporary leisure activities reflect the increasing commodification of everyday life: “Dining in the old city offers a glimpse, however fleeting and misrepresented, of a life lost” (Salamandra, 2004, p.74). In restaurants, people share their personal spaces to establish a shared private space in the middle of public space. This could be in the meeting of a group of friends where the table provides a focus for a private sphere to be established in the middle of what otherwise would be a public arena (Madanipour, 2003) (see Fig.5.47).



Figure 5.47 Restaurant in old Damascus.

Source: www.olddamascus.com.

Socialising functions within new restaurants and cafés also changed. Syrian TV series normally portray people in ‘traditional’ *hammam* and cafés, as having more direct face-to-face orientation, less distance between each other, more touching, more direct visual contact, and greater voice loudness with the sound of water running from the fountain. Socialising in restaurant has now been invaded by products of modern technology, wide television screens are displayed to broadcast songs and world events. Mobiles are tools to communicate with the world outside the restaurants, so face-to-face orientation and direct visual contacts have been distracted by means of technology. In contemporary Damascus, where social status has become more acute, these public spaces have become theatres of social life in which the displays of status and wealth are made.

The functional transformation of many residential houses to business use attracted a lot of traffic movement in order to transport goods, products and different materials as well as for shopping and tourism. A 2005 report prepared by the local authority (Old Damascus Directorate ODD) which showed the change of land use (activities) areas, noted that residential use dropped by 30% from 60.000 inhabitants in 1936 to 40.000 in 2005 and the area converted from residential use to commercial use is 32 hectares (see Table 5.1). Public spaces have been increasingly dominated by mobility and car movement and/or used as parking lots. Enlargement of movement space in favour of vehicle circulation diminished social space and affected socialising activities happening in public spaces.

The old city (128 hectare)	1936	2005
<i>Umayyad Mosque</i> area	1.5	1.5
Citadel area	3.4	3.4
<i>Suqs</i> and commercial use	10.9	12.6
Roads and alleyways	16.4	16.5
<i>Bustan Sukkar</i> (garden)	3.1	
Expropriated buildings	for public safety, to be schools and hotels	14.5
Schools		3.3
Residential use	94.2	62.2

Table 5.1 Surface areas (Hectare) of activities in old Damascus in 1936 and 2005

Source: Damascus Governorate.

Environmental problems have contributed to the loss of outdoor spaces for socialising activities such as the cafes along *Barada* River and public gardens, which brought richness and variety to public life (see Fig. 5.48). In the early 1960s, environmental deterioration caused by rapid industrialisation accelerated in the natural flow of the *Barada* River and in ground water, as well as air pollution. The allocation of industrial areas along the major canals discharged polluted water directly into these surface canals (Masanori, 1989).



Figure 5.48 Degradation of *Barada* River near *Bab Tuma* district Source: the researcher.

The historical fabric of Damascus has entered an accelerated process of degradation due to the socioeconomic pressures on the city as a whole. In 1979, the old city inside the wall was listed as a World Heritage site, though a report by ICOMOS (2001) expressed that the old city is in great danger. A recent article in *ES* (2006) noted that the historic fabric suffers from neglect not only within the old city inside the walls, which has benefited from UNESCO protection, but also in the areas outside the walls, which "have steadily lost their place to urban development and as the rich dwellers move out, slow impoverishment moves in" (*ES*, 2006, p.87).

Currently, Syria is in a transitional period. Transition for Syria is multi-dimensional as the country is witnessing a period of working to restore social freedoms, economic reforms bringing work and prosperity, and a new international image. In parallel the Prime Minister of Syria assured through an interview by OBG (*ES*, 2005), that the main government objective is to make a comprehensive reform process in administrative and economic structures of the government. An essential economic reform is moving from command economy to market economy and working on administrative and economic reforms. Tourism is set to play a greater role in the Syrian economy, with a number of positive developments taking place on the international stage combined with greater government investment and awareness of the sector's potential. Damascus's unique

architectural heritage is being revalued and promoted as a great national resource which contributes to the tourism sector.

Finally, to recapitulate on the above description and analysis, Table 5.2 provides a summary of the historical evolution of public space in Damascus.

Table 5-2 Historical evolution of public space and public realm in Damascus Source: the researcher.

Historical periods		Political, socio-economic changes	Planning system	Key features of urban form
Aramaic	1800			Rectangular shape Wall Seven gates Urban centres
Assyrians				
Chaldeans				
Persian				
Greeks				
Romans				
Byzantines				
Umayyad		Islamic rule Sub communities Internal markets Social segregation	No building Regulations. Strong socio-cultural control Ecological+ Environmental design principles	Organic form Dominant organic form Historic core with some suburbs outside the wall. Clusters of neighbourhoods Neighbourhood as a unit. Main architectural elements: 1. Citadel 2. The gates 3. The wall 4.Omayyad Mosque 5. Suqs. 6. Courtyard houses.
Abbasien				
Fatimid				
Ayyubid				
Mameluk				
Ottoman				
		Modernity	‘Tanzimat’ reform	
		European interference.	Applying modern architecture theories.	Complex of public buildings Tikkiyeha (Hijaz rail station- Saraye building). Wide streets (al Nasser Street) Square (al Marje square) Straight streets with intersections forming squares (Baghdad Street) Public gardens. Cinemas, theatres
French		Incorporated into the broader economy.	Beaux Arts concepts	Dualism : traditional/modern
Independence		Capitalist		
	1947			
Political conflicts	1963	Population growth	Socialist planning model	New Damascus: lots of public spaces in squares and wide avenues
		Arab socialist	A series of five-year plans	Old Damascus: historical city entered an accelerated process of decline.
		International Migration	‘Master plans’ Functional zoning	Monumentality
		Rural-urban Migration		
Political stability	1970	Arab socialist?	Centralisation Planning ‘command and control’ approach	
	1990	Transitory to market economy	Modernisation	

Historical periods		Key features of public space and public realm
Aramaic	1800	<p>Agora Forum Notable centres for public life</p>
Assyrians		
Chaldeans		
Persian		
Greeks		
Romans		
Byzantines		
Umayyad		<p>Suwayqa - Public space A hierarchy in moving from public space (main street) to semi-public space (<i>darb</i>) to semi-private space (cul-de-sac) to private space (the courtyard). Social and movement spaces overlapped. Courtyards houses (private realms) Courtyards of mosques and khans (parochial & public realms) Cafés and public baths - public life. Strong line between public-private.</p>
Abbasien		
Fatimid		
Ayyubid		
Mameluk		
Ottoman		
French		<p>‘Publicness’ of public space. Enlargement of movement space. Administrative – governmental city centre (<i>Marjeh</i> Square). Public gardens Cinemas and theatres. Wide avenues meet to form squares. Culture – administrative centres (<i>Bawabit Salihyye</i>). Shift in gender using the space.</p>
Independence		
	1947	
Political conflicts	1963	<p>Change in distinction between public – private. Shifts in realms : change of private realms to public realm</p>
Political stability	1970	<p>Change in nature of spaces: private and semi-private public changed to semi-public and public spaces. Lost spaces. More enlargement of movement space affecting social space.</p>

5.2.5 Reflection on the evolution of public space and the concept of public realm in Damascus

This chapter has so far reviewed specific literature on Damascus which includes morphological and functional analysis as well as links to a historical background on political, economic and social context (in Appendix 5.1). This helped the researcher achieve a deeper understanding of the changing nature of public spaces and public realm and their political and socioeconomic context. This review followed a historical account to trace the transformation of public space and public realm in Damascus. As stated in the introduction, it would be impossible to trace all the detailed changes of public space and public realm along the history of Damascus, with time, space and available materials being some of the constraints to be mentioned.

The review showed that the existing urban forms in Damascus until the beginning of the 20th century have developed depending on social and environmental factors and weak influence of building legislations and planning regulations, but strong and deeply embedded forms of social control. The ‘traditional’ forms are the courtyard buildings, which are clustered composing the urban fabric in the old town (inside the walls) as well as some suburbs located towards the West, North and South areas outside the walls. These forms expanded horizontally along narrow lanes with modest building heights (in general with two floors). The main circulation axes are occupied by the commercial functions and essential services. There was separation in public and private realm, in work and residential places. Moreover there was a hierarchy in the nature of space ranging across public, semi-public, semi-private and private spaces.

The main public activities of the old city were located around its geographical centre. The citadel, Friday Mosque, Sunday church and its main *suqs* – as the centres of political, spiritual and symbolic, and economic power – constituted focal points at the city level. At the neighbourhood level, *Hammam*, cafes and local *suq* were indoor spaces fulfilling very important socialisation functions in old Damascus. The historic core had a relatively small population and very high density of ‘acquaintanceship’ with a wealth of private and parochial realms. The small size of the population and their strong social bonds with each other reduced the publicness of urban space inside the urban quarters (Madanipour, 2003). The physical transformation of these realms began with European impact and modernity since 1800, whereby old Damascus witnessed

increasing ‘publicness’ of its public spaces through the formation of new centres composed of blocks (public and residential buildings) and streets. Public gardens, cinemas and theatres were public spaces which introduced new ways of socialising functions besides ‘traditional’ ones.

The urban development of new Damascus was influenced by the European impact in terms of social structure, building types and materials. The European impact is revealed through many changes: new expansion towards the north and the west areas of the old city; cutting through of wide streets and linkage axes; tenement buildings (3-4 floors) with commercial activities on the ground floor; detached buildings such as villas; tall buildings (5 or more floors) and construction of some governmental buildings. These expansion areas emphasised Beaux Arts concepts with lots of public spaces in squares and wide avenues provided through the implementation of master plans drawn up in 1936, 1965 and 1968 – the latter being the one which the government refers to date.

At the beginning of the post independence period, Damascus became a theatre for conflict between different political parties, which eventually was reflected in its historic areas through the proposal and application of different concepts and actions to intervene in the upgrading and improvement of the historic fabric. From 1970s up till now, this period is characterised by the governmental urban development policies which followed command and control planning approach, as well as social and economic changes affecting the wider population. The historic fabric then entered in a period of accelerated process of decline though the old city inside the wall was recognised internationally by enlisting on the World Heritage list.

From post independence to date there has been a critical shift in the nature of public spaces and public realm in old Damascus. The modern movement in design, zoning and land-use policy, technological innovation and use of transport and communication technologies have led to shifts in socialising functions within public spaces, which have become dominated by the cars, leaving little for social space to develop, and losing much of their meaning and role in social life.

Currently, Syria is in a transitional period from a command economy to a market economy and working on administrative and economic reforms. Within these trend “Yet the public space was always under threat from the privatisation of space by individual

encroachments or by powerful interest” (Madanipour, 2003, p.213). At the same time, old Damascus is one of the oldest cities in the world still serving for residential purposes, thus use and symbolic values are highlighted here. In terms of policy development, functional and exchange values in the market appear to be increasingly determining the local authority’s interests. These tensions have become acute in public spaces, as is shown in the following section, where two public spaces on the edge of the old city are analysed: *Bab Tuma* space and Citadel space.

5.3 Morphological and functional analysis and assessment of two selected open spaces in the historic fabric of Damascus

Section 5.2 provided a general background to the historical development of public spaces and public realm in Damascus. This section focuses on the morphological and functional analysis and assessment of two selected public spaces on the edge of the old city. The main aim of this section is to answer the question:

2c) How has the meeting between old and new been resolved in contemporary Damascus in specific public spaces?

Two spaces located on the edge of the old city were selected to be analysed: (1) Citadel space and (2) *Bab Tuma* space. Both are located near important historical monuments which are considered the main features of the old city (citadel, gate, main street & victory arch, cathedral and great mosque). Data were collected from repeated observations of these spaces which were made directly during the fieldtrips (2006, 2007), and indirectly by constructing the past traditional situation and summarising the key events which have transformed these spaces on the basis of historic documents, grey literature and maps. Another source of data was informal as well as semi-structured interviews with academics and official authorities. An assessment of the existing situation of these spaces has been undertaken according to the criteria developed in chapter 2 (section 2.3.2).

5.3.1 Citadel space

Background

The citadel area is one of the most important in the centre of Damascus (Fig. 5.49). It is situated on the west side of the old city at one of the busiest vehicular and pedestrian intersections and where the entrances to the citadel and *Al Hamidiyeh suq* are located, these being two other important features of the old Damascus. The area dates back to the 12th century, when the city began to expand westwards outside its walls.



Figure 5.49 Location of Citadel space within the city.

Source: www.googleearthmap.com.

The area has been transformed significantly by two events. The first occurred in 1925, when French troops bombed the city and the southern part of the Citadel was destroyed in a fire. The Ecochard plan in 1936 for this area (known as *al-Hariqa* "the fire") imposed a completely new layout for the historic fabric inside the wall, and marked the beginning of the area turning from a residential into a commercial area. The second was when Ecochard's 1968 plan proposed the construction of *Al Thawra* Street to ease the

traffic. *Al Thawra* Street cut through the *Saroudja* district towards the citadel which exposed the space in front of the citadel to a high level of traffic. This entailed the demolishing in 1983 of the entirety of *al Khuja Suq*, which covered the west side facade of the citadel, in order to show the citadel and also for excavation purposes (see Fig.5. 50 and 51).

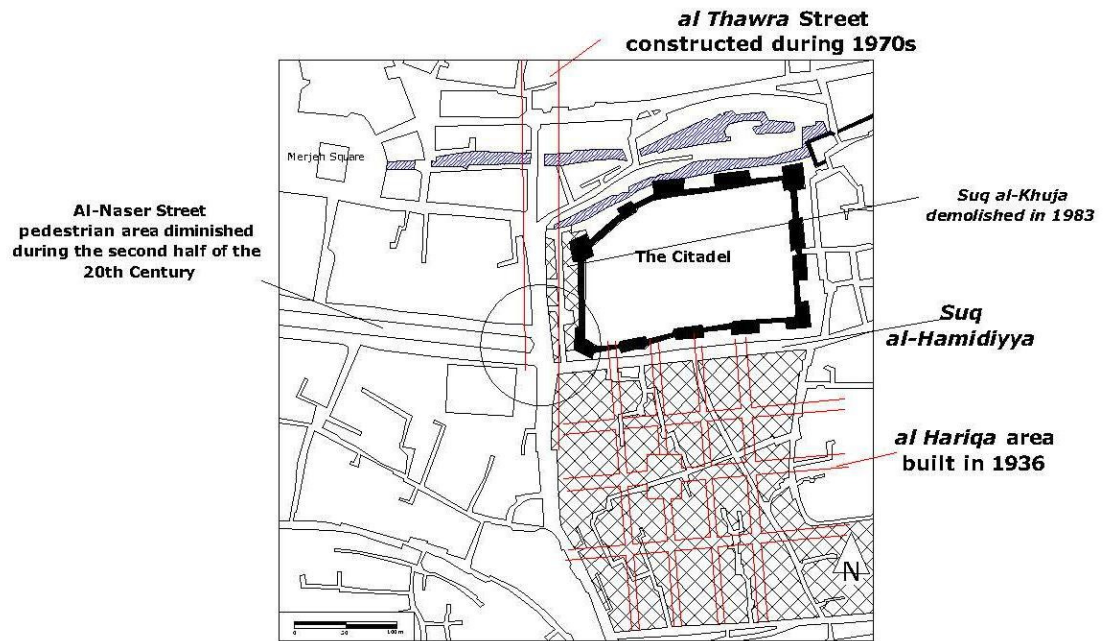


Figure 5.50 Morphological changes which happened in the area surrounding Citadel space during the 20th century. Source: the researcher.

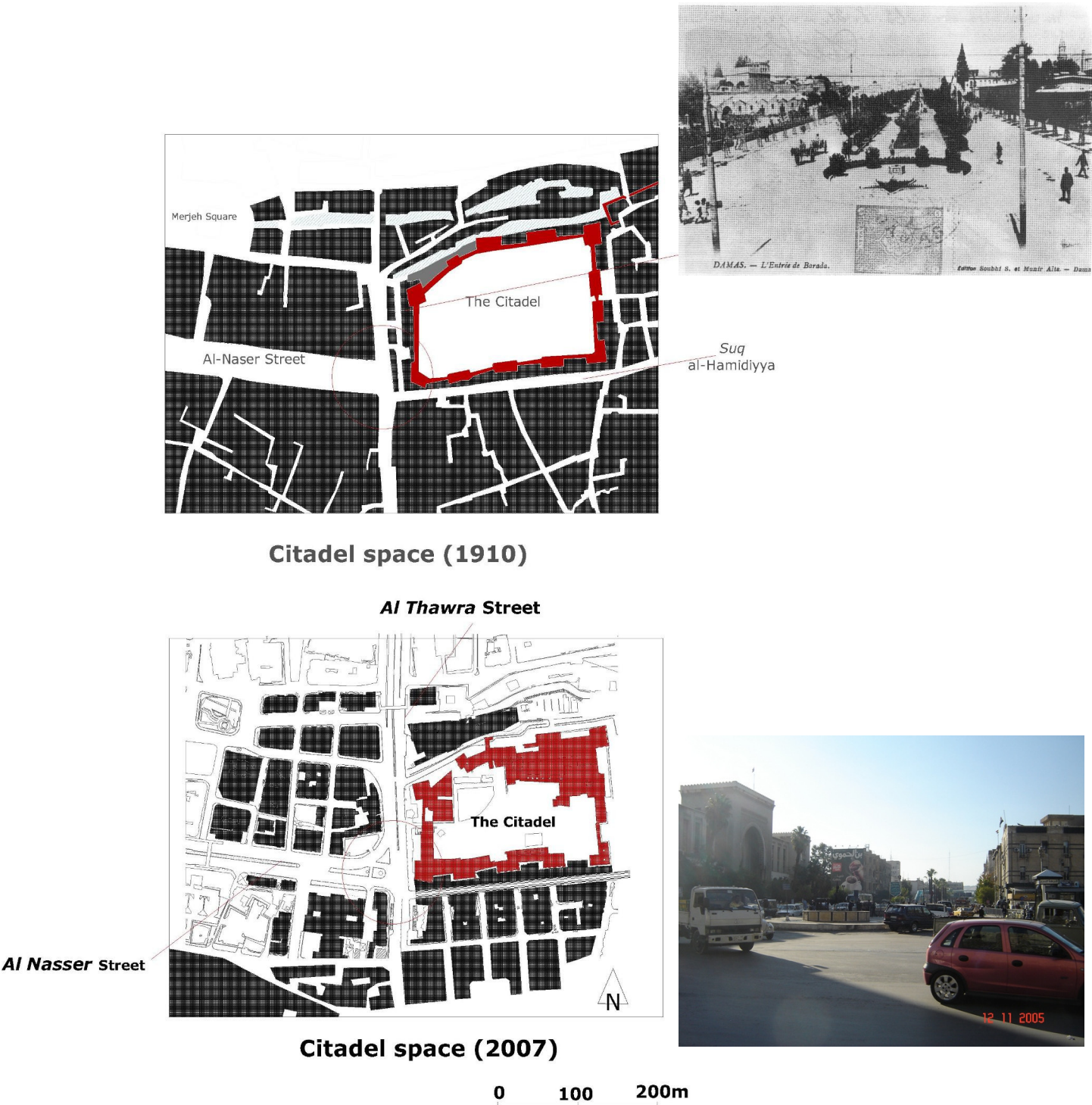


Figure 5.51Citadel space in 1910 and 2007. Source: the researcher. The old photograph from Al Shihabi, 1986.

The demolition processes of the 1970s and 1980s widened the space and made it irregular. According to one professional (Interviewee no.31), the resulting space has the potential to form a square. Based on the criteria developed in chapter 2, a maximum dimension of 70-100 meters is preferable for open space as this is suitable for seeing events happening in the space. The area shown in figure 5.51 in red, which is defined to some extent by the configuration of perimeter buildings, though with large openings in this perimeter, offers the possibility of a square in which the maximum diagonal distances would be in the range of around 100 metres. This is the space that has been used for the subsequent analysis that follows (Fig. 5.52).

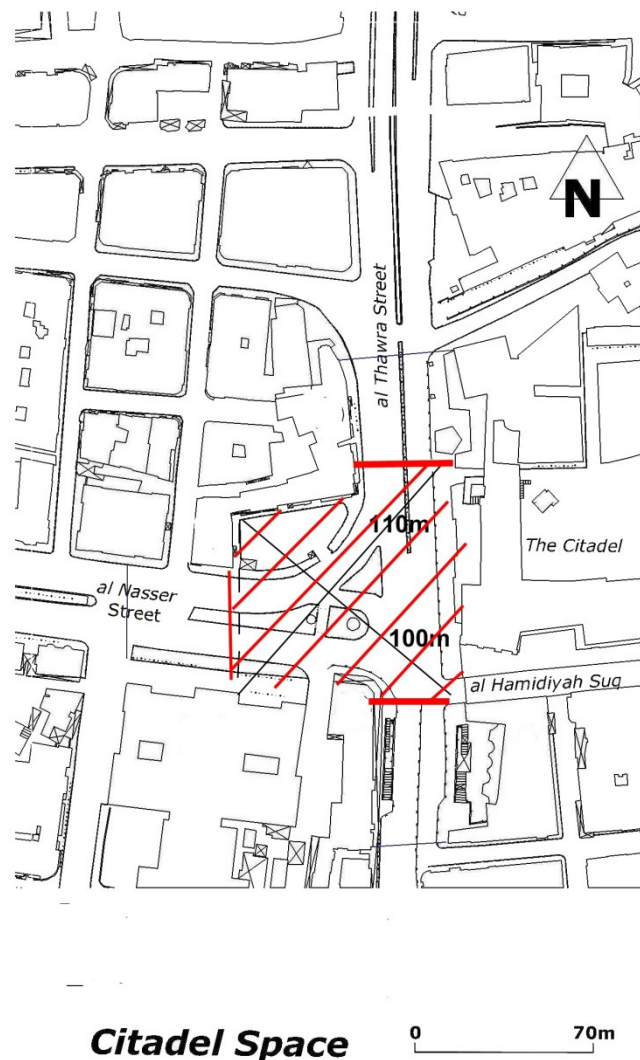


Figure 5.52 Citadel space defined.

Source: the researcher.



Figure 5.53 Citadel space from its South Western corner towards al Thawra Street in 2007.
Source: the researcher, 2007.



Figure 5.54 Parking on the north western corner of the Citadel space.
Source: the researcher, 2007.

Analysis

Urban form

The citadel space consists of important and historical buildings such as the Citadel (Ayyubid period), the Justice Palace (*Kaser al Adel*) and *al Hamidiyeh suq*, which are related to the Ottoman period (Figs.5.55 & 56). '*Al Hariqa*' commercial buildings were built in 1936 and the remaining buildings developed during the 1950s. The heights of the buildings defining the space range between 2-5 floors.



Figure 5.55 Western facade of the citadel.
Source: the researcher, 2007.



Figure 5.56 Entrance of *al Hamidiyeh suq*
Source: the researcher, 2007.

The layout of the space is still questioned and needs to be improved, especially in the north-west corner, which is an interesting corner in front of the citadel, but it is used as a parking (see Fig. 5.54). The scale of the space is appropriate as human scale is respected. The space is an intersection of two important streets in the city centre: *Al Nasser Street* and *Al Thawra Street* and moreover it is located on the western entrance to the old city. It is an important location to approach the old city from the western side (Figs.5.58 and 5.59).



Figure 5.58 *Al Nasser Street* from the East.
Source: the researcher, 2007.



Figure 5.57 *Al Thawra Street* from South to North. Source: the researcher, 2007.

According to the criteria developed in Chapter 2, built form and open space are generally successful as the space has important historical buildings, its size and the heights of the surrounding buildings are appropriate, it is located at busy intersection, with important and interesting historical amenities to visit. However, its layout and shape still need attention.

Movement

Generally, the area surrounding the space is characterised by heavy vehicular traffic and dense pedestrian flow. In the JICA report in 1999 (the most recent data obtained by researcher in 2007) this area was defined as one of the main areas of congestion in Damascus, with about 3000 vehicles/hr and 10000 pedestrians/hr during daytime. The citadel space is not accessible to all people, particularly for elderly, disabled and women with children. Pedestrian facilities provided to reach the space vary, but are not suitable for all people. Pavements in some areas are deteriorated and widths are insufficient for the volume of pedestrians in some places; in addition, obstacles such as road and advertisement signs and kiosks greatly decrease pavement capacities (see Fig. 5.59).



Figure 5.59 Interference between the movement of cars and pedestrians in Citadel space.

Source: the researcher, 2006.

There is a pedestrian crossing between the two sides of *al Nasser* Street which has poor road markings and is dominated by vendors (see Fig. 5.60). Another problem observed on the site is that some pedestrians cross the roads in undesignated areas, which causes interference between the movement of cars and pedestrians, and consequently causes disturbance of movement, waste of fuel, danger to pedestrians and pollution to the environment. There is a pedestrian overpass cross *Al Thawra* Street to the north of Citadel space (up to 6m clearance) with concrete or metal structures. The stairs section causes an obstruction for pedestrian as it occupies most of the pavement width. It is inconvenient and tiring to use, especially for disabled or older people and people with children or prams. It is also occupied by vendors, which disturbs pedestrian movement. Moreover, its design does not match the features of the historical city. A pedestrian underpass is located near *al Hamidiyeh suq* which is relatively better designed. This has one escalator which facilitates the movement of older people and people with children but it has a narrow entrance. Its height is about 3.5m and it is lined with shops. These are not properly cleaned or sufficiently well lit, and sometimes they have drainage problems. People avoid using the underpass especially at night.



Figure 5.60 Pedestrian route in al Nasser Street, dominated by vendors. Source: the researcher.

The area devoted to pedestrians is 32% of the whole area. The pedestrian surface area of the space today consists of 8 islands that pedestrian can walk between, in contrast to the situation seen in old photographs, where pedestrians move across the space in a natural and leisurely fashion in all directions. The space is dominated by well connected vehicular routes which undermine pedestrian movement. The area devoted to car movement is 60% of the whole area (see Fig. 5.61).

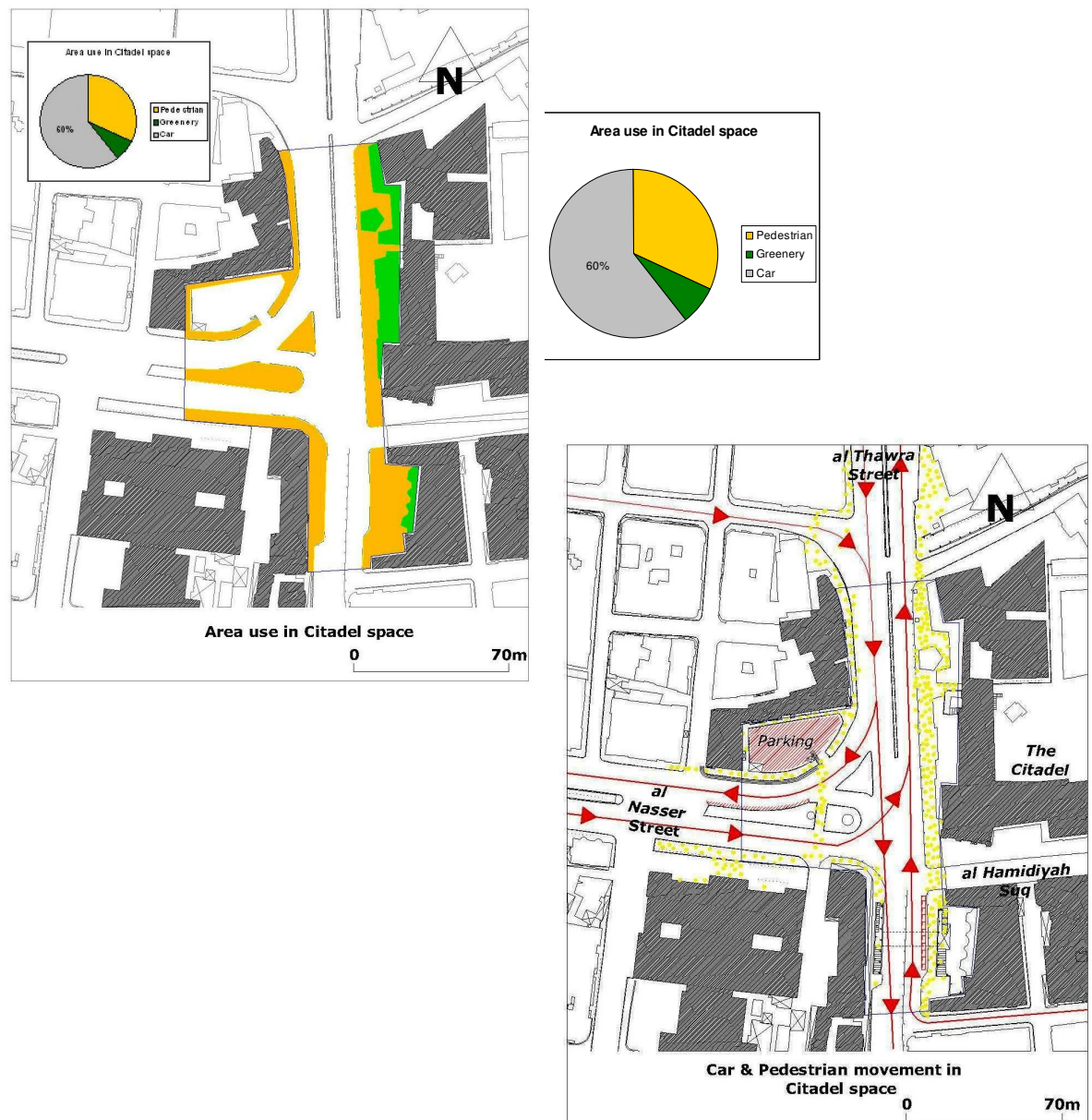


Figure 5.61 Vehicular and pedestrian area in Citadel space.

Source: the researcher.

The space is not quite successful or comfortable for pedestrian movement. It is not accessible to all people and moreover, has poor pedestrian permeability. On the other hand, it is well connected for vehicular movement; it is an intersection of two main streets in the city centre, so it is an important part of a metropolitan traffic network.

Use & activities

The space has two hotels with shops in the ground floors, administrative uses such as a bank and the Justice Palace, the citadel and *suq al Hamidiyeh* (see Fig. 5.62). It is used heavily during the daytime, in particular between 11.00am and 9 pm, when the shops and the *suq* close. Users include office workers, construction workers people on business, shoppers and visitors to the historical amenities. Ground floor frontages are generally welcoming, consisting of small units which offer many experiences during the daytime. At night-time, they are uninteresting and with no transparency.

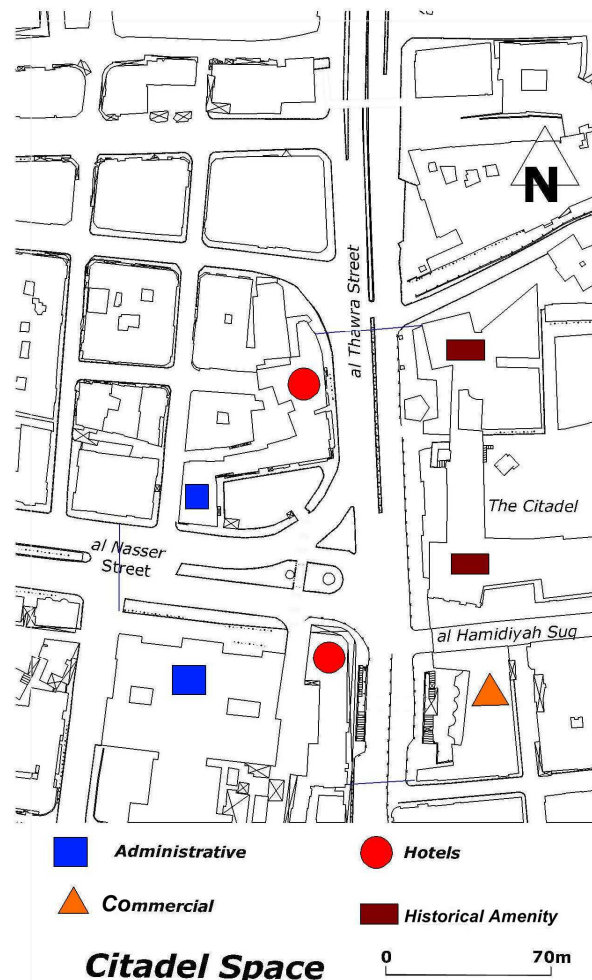


Figure 5.62 Uses on the perimeter of Citadel space.
Source: the researcher.

The space has a parking area in the north western corner. Generally, the area surrounding the space lacks parking facilities. The nearest car park is located to the North West, beside *Marje* Square, which accommodates about 200 cars. According to interviewees from the traffic department, the Damascus Governorate realises that there is a shortage of parking, and *Hariqa* Square was proposed as a site for an underground car park, but the General Directorate of Antique and Museums (GDAM) rejected the project because of the existence of ruins under the square. An important step that Damascus Governorate is also taking forward is to limit the access for vehicles inside the old city. In order to achieve this 8 parking sites have been proposed, three of these being located around the old city near the city wall (see Fig. 5.63).

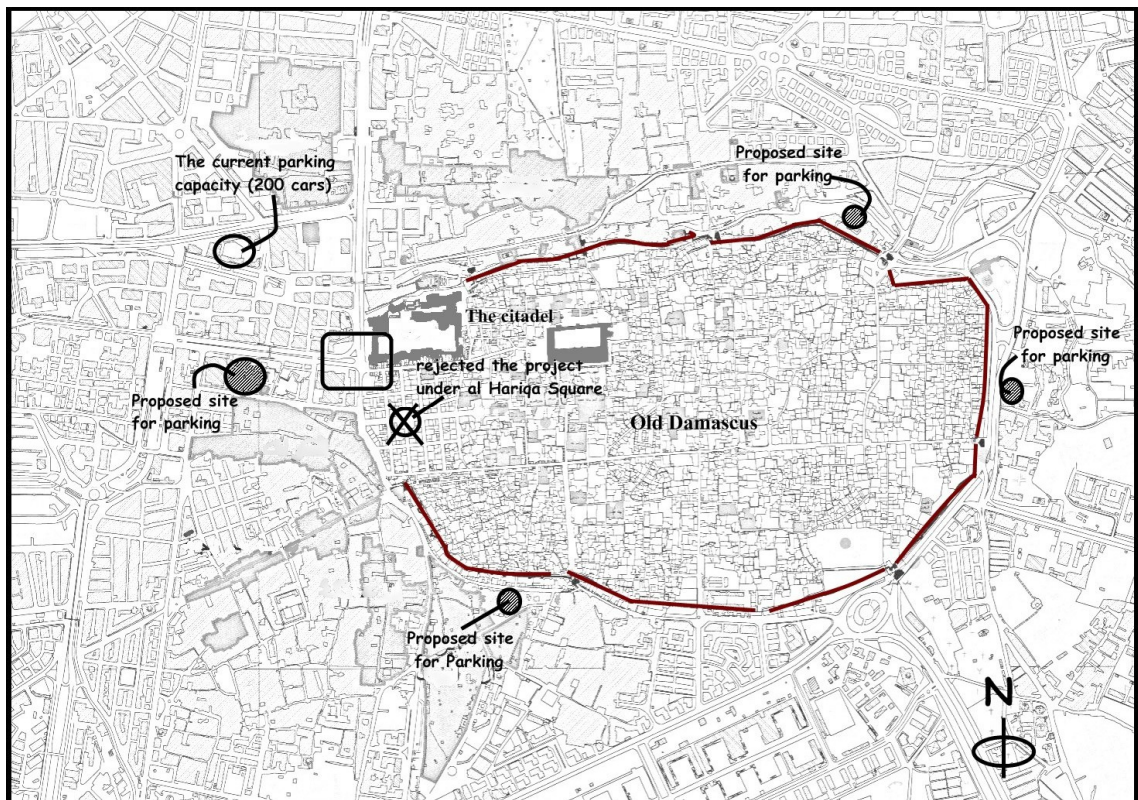


Figure 5.63 Locations of proposed new car parks.

Source: produced by the researcher on the basis of information from Old Damascus Directorate.

Observations of the space showed that vendors occupied the pedestrian crossing area in *al Naser* Street and this creates obstacles for pedestrian movement. On the other hand vendors who occupied the area in front of the Citadel created an activity node, which did not affect the pedestrian movement as the width of the pavement there accommodated the pedestrian movement as well as vending activity. Planting is

concentrated along the western wall of the Citadel, making this visually but not physically accessible. The citadel space is located at street level and offers open views towards *al Nasser Street* and *al Thawra Street*. Observation showed that there is no seating at all in the space. However, the planted area near the citadel has been successful in attracting people to rest and watch others, with users using the boundaries of planted areas to sit (Fig. 5.64). This creates an edge effect as described in the criteria in chapter 2. It is a popular zone for resting and moreover, the location of *Salah al Din* statue within the zone emphasises it as a focus for the space (Fig. 5.65). Two water features were noted at the beginning of *al Nasser Street* (Fig. 5.66). Observation showed that there are no playing areas or pavement cafés within the space.



Figure 5.64 Lack of benches.
Source: the researcher, 2005.



Figure 5.65 *Salah al Din* statue.
Source: the researcher, 2005.



Figure 5.66 The two water features in the Citadel space.
Source: the researcher, 2005.

According to interviews (Nos. 13 & 20) and observation of the space, materials, signage and lighting are of poor quality and need regular cleaning and maintenance. According to the evaluation criteria, the space accommodates the three types of activities; however, it suffers from poor quality.

Reflection

After reviewing and analysing the Citadel space from morphological and functional perspectives, this section reflects on the historical evolution of the Citadel space as a public space, along with analysis of interviews to understand the changes which have happened within this space.

The nature of this space has changed significantly through time. Since 12th Century, this space could be seen as related to public sphere outside the private sphere of the city. With the city expansion to the west, the space then presented a transition zone for as people leave the old city to an area where strong public/private divide (Fig. 5.67). Since 1800, these spaces were exposed to increasing degrees of ‘publicness’, as the review of the historical evolution of public space in Damascus showed.

The Citadel space witnessed the advance of modernity, exposure to increased ‘publicness’, and dramatic events such as the bombing of the *al Hariqa* area and *al Khuja Suq* and the construction of *al Thawra* Street. The destruction of many parochial realms affected the distinction between public and private realms of the city as well as the overlapping of social and movement spaces within the space. With the development of new transport modes and the widening of the space to accommodate more vehicles (bubbles, movable private realms), movement space has been enlarged in detriment of social space. In the second half of the 20th century, with the city’s development and the concentration of governmental and commercial activities, combined with the increased traffic, movement space in the middle of financial and retail districts has been enlarged.

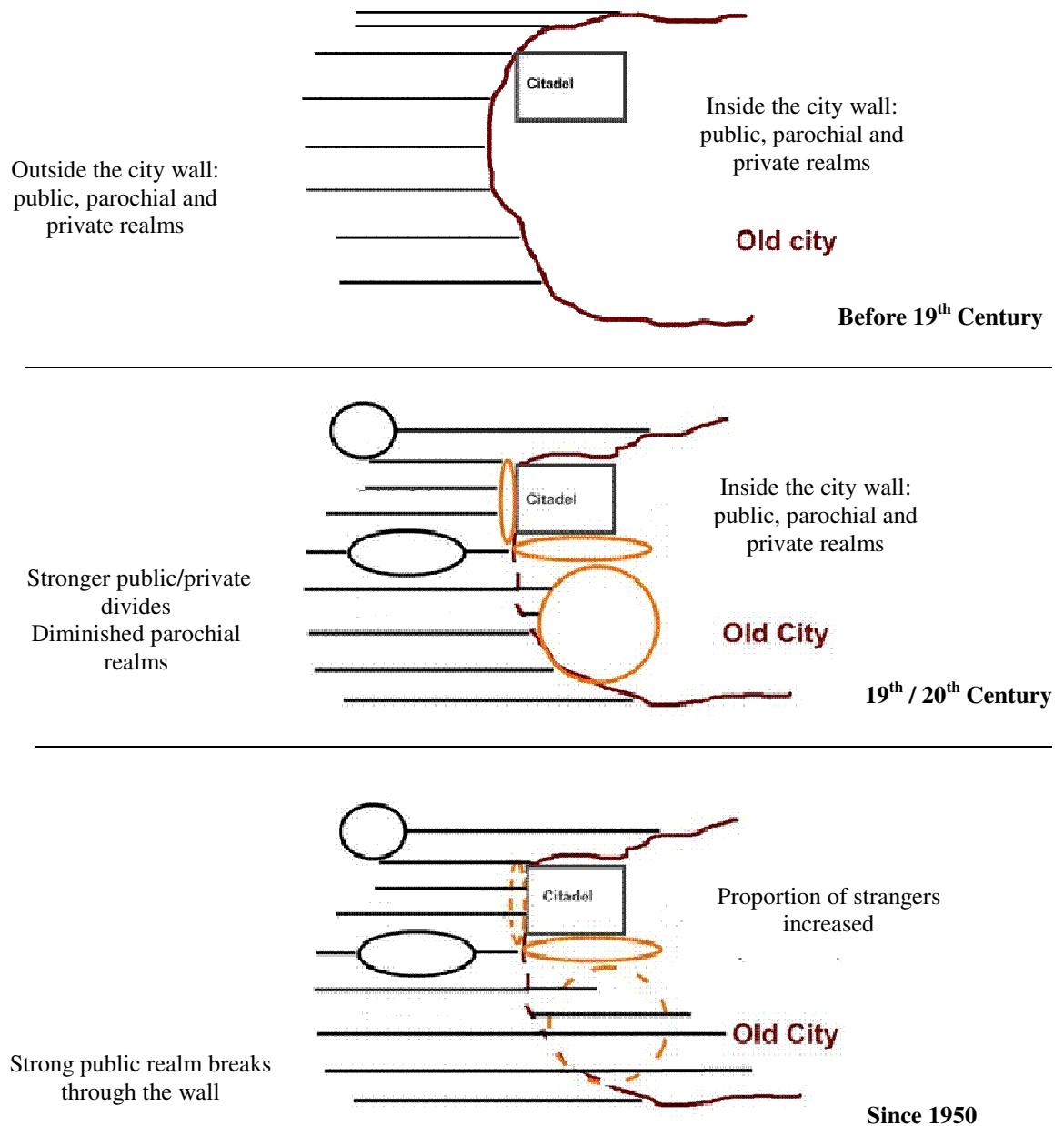


Figure 5.67 Transformation in the nature of the Citadel space.
Source: the researcher.

Citadel space now is one public space which holds many important symbolic values and meanings. Many interviewees, particularly professionals and experts expressed that the space is very important – it has a long history. One interviewee (no. 31) described his memory of how he used to go through the space to visit his father who worked in the citadel and how he enjoyed visiting *al Khuja Suq* (now demolished) on his way there.

On the other hand, the local authorities have put more emphasis on functional and use values over symbolic values. Interviews with key actors who are responsible for the space showed that the key interest for GDAM is the citadel and *al Hamidiyah suq*, and their restoration. Old Damascus Directorate considers this area outside the city wall, so therefore not under its responsibility. The key interest for the traffic directorate is to manage traffic and reduce congestion. They considered the pedestrian underpass to be the perfect solution for pedestrian movement in that area, thus reflecting the priority they give to vehicular movement over pedestrian movement.

Any solution to the problem of traffic congestion which is limited to the space itself would potentially provide only short term answers. A holistic and long-term solution for the traffic problems is needed in order to ease the congestion in citadel space. In this regard, the local authorities have taken a number of measures which attempt to improve the traffic situation in general in Damascus such as improving public transport. It is worth noting here that the last intervention which occurred to improve the space was implemented in 2002 by Damascus Governorate, but it was limited to the rehabilitation of *al Hamidiyah suq*, replacing the pavement in front the Citadel and construction of the pedestrian underpass in front of *al Hamidiyah suq*. The last attempt made to ease congestion in this area was in 9/2006 when the Traffic Directorate asked professionals for technical assistance to provide a solution. The winner solution was a proposed a tunnel between *al Nasser* Street and *al Thawra* Street, as well as an underground square (containing shops) linked to the pedestrian underpass located near *al Hamidiyah suq*. To date nothing has been implemented.

This reflection highlights three points. The first is that this space holds very important symbolic value, which needs further investigation, particularly from the users' point of view. The second is that solutions to problems faced by this space (namely traffic congestion) require a more strategic approach than simply focusing on the space itself.

The third is that it raises a number of issues which need to be dealt with concerning process. Since this research is concerned more with the process of creation and regeneration of public space than the product, chapter 6 investigates the governance process of public space in historic Damascus. First, however, an analysis of the *Bab Tuma* space is provided in the following section.

5.3.2 Bab Tuma space

Background

Bab Tuma space is located on the north-eastern corner of the old city, consisting of two parts, inside and outside the city wall. Historically *Bab Tuma* is one of the original seven gates which pierced the old city of Damascus during the Greek rule. During the Roman period its name became Thomas Gate, dedicated to St. Thomas. Many battles between Romans (the Byzantine Empire) and Arab Muslims occurred at the gate, which was refurbished many times for military purposes. No considerable change happened subsequently to the gate and its area until the beginning of the 20th century (*Al Shihabi*, 1996) (Fig. 5.68).



Figure 5.68 Location of Bab Tuma space within the city.
Source: www.googleearth.com.

In the first half of the 20th century, at the beginning of the French Mandate, a mosque close to *Bab Tuma* was removed (though not its minaret), and in 1936 the architect M Ecochard removed the minaret and refurbished the gate. Another big change took place in the second half of 20th century when many buildings surrounding the gate were demolished by the Damascus Governorate and The General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums (GDAM), to widen the space and to ease car movement and at the same time to show the gate as a freestanding monument. This involved expropriating nearby buildings surrounding the gate, until their eventual demolition by GDAM in 1975, when the space assumed its current shape (see Fig. 5.69).

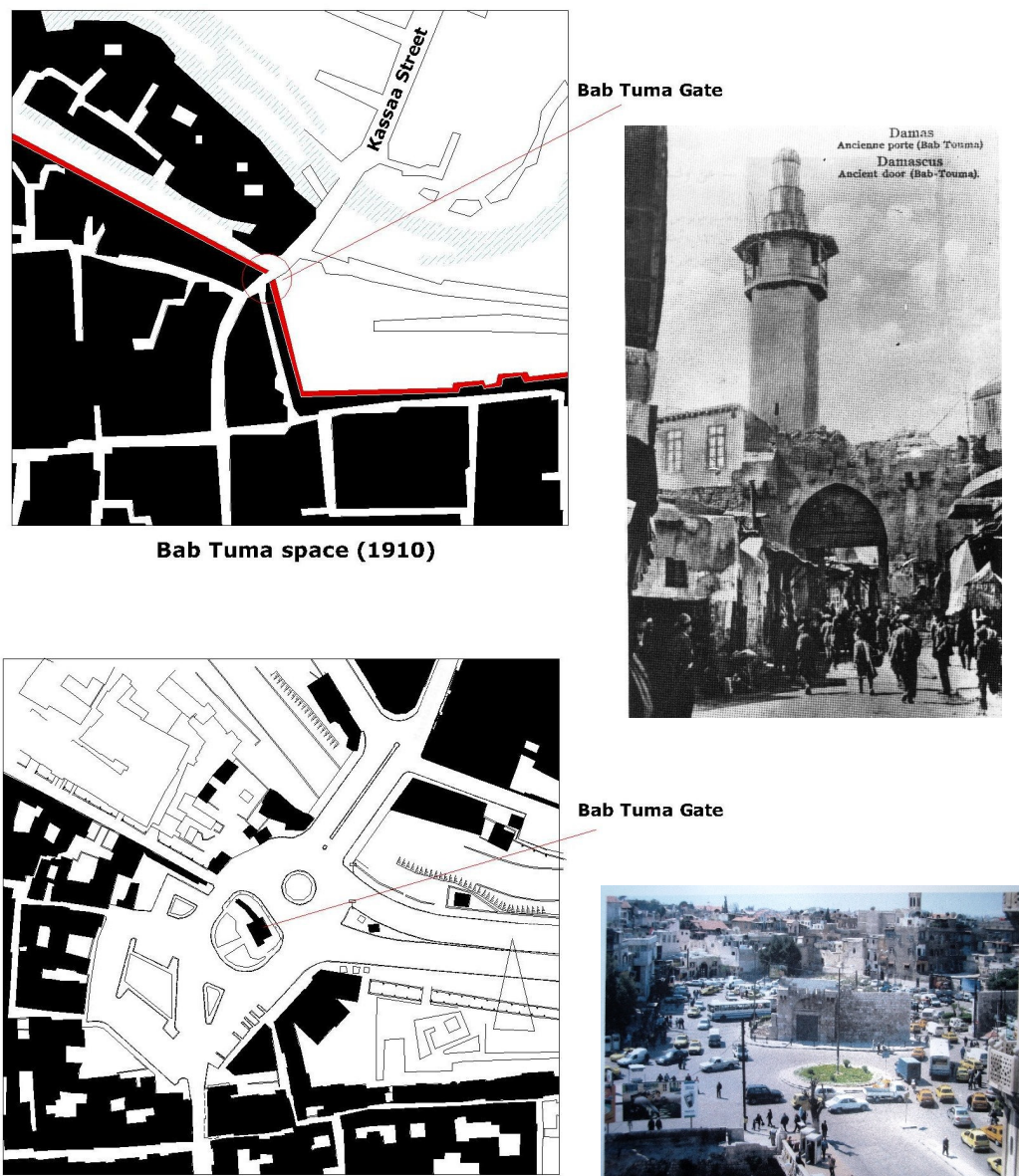


Figure 5.69 Bab Tuma space in 1910 and 2007.

Source: the researcher. The old Photograph of *Bab Tuma* is from Al Shihabi, 1986.

Analysis

Urban form

The heights of the built forms enclosing the space range between 2 to 4 floors. The buildings which remain from the fabric which was broken up have 2 floors, while the buildings which were built in the second half of the 20th century have 4 floors. The maximum distance in the space (within the city wall) is 90m, which is appropriate, according to the criteria, to allow seeing the events happening within the space (see Fig. 5.70). The space contains *Bab Tuma* Gate, which is related to the Roman period, most of the buildings on the northern and western sides being originally from the organic form period, while on the eastern side they developed during the second half of the 20th century. According to the criteria developed in chapter 2, the buildings have relatively appropriate heights. The building marked in Figure 5.70 has negative and positive points – the negative being that it overlooks the nearby courtyard houses and the positive being that it provides some shade to the space in the afternoon.

The space was originally a linear shape which started from the city gate, introducing the user to a traditional *suq* with shops located on the two sides. The gate was originally a point to pass through from and to the old city, which historically served to keep people safe inside the old city during raids or sieges. According to one informant, the interventions implemented in the area in the second half of the 20th century were inherited from the Morozov master plan of 1956, which suggested clearing the area surrounding the gate to create *Bab Tuma* square with a roundabout to ease vehicular movement. Though this plan was rejected, according to one interviewee work did begin. The space that resulted from demolishing the houses has an irregular shape. The gate itself has now become a monument surrounded by cars and parking areas. The gate stands between two open spaces: one outside the old city which is a roundabout and another behind the gate mainly used as a parking. With the expansion of the city during the second half of the 20th century, it is now a meeting point of two important axes, i.e. *Al Kassaa Sreet* (*Bab Tuma* axis) and *Sheikh Raslan Street* (*Bab Al Salam* axis).

According to the criteria developed in chapter 2, the layout and the scale of the space are not quite successful because priority has been given to accommodating cars first and then to the design of spatial form and the pattern of open space. The space does not have the image of being an important entrance to the old city, in particular for the user approaching the old city. When exiting from the old city, the space appears simply like a hole in the fabric.

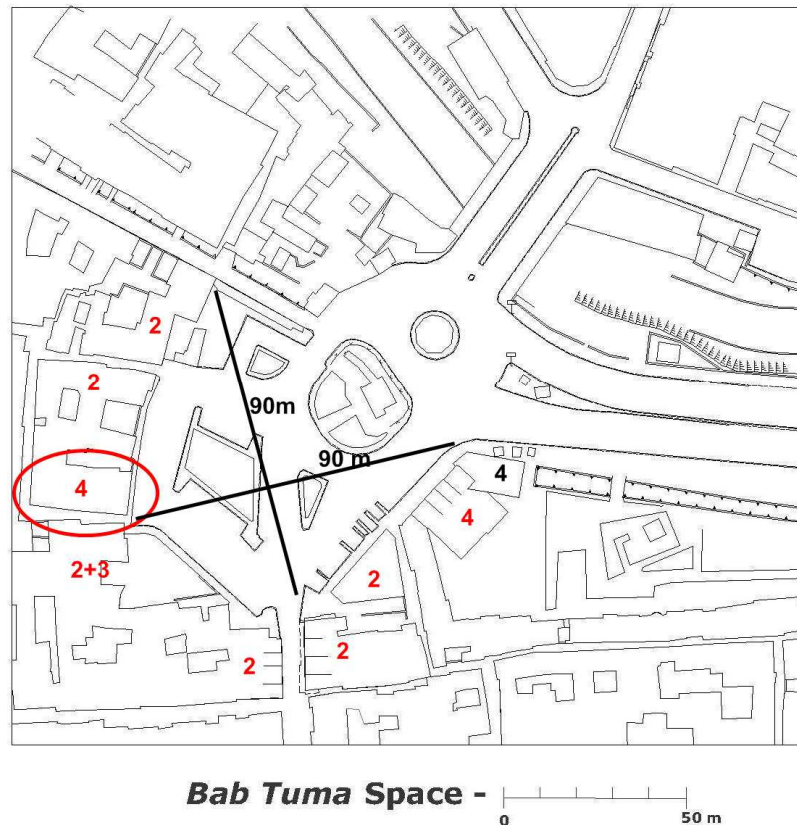


Figure 5.70 Heights of the buildings surrounding Bab Tuma space and dimensions within the space. Source: the researcher.

Movement

According to observations made during the 2006/2007 fieldtrips, it was noted that the space is not accessible to all people, particularly women with children and elderly and disabled people, as it has poor pedestrian routes and it lacks facilities to respond to the mobility of different people. Observations of the space showed that the space is safe and no interviewee reported the opposite. The area devoted to pedestrian movement is 21%

of the whole area, which is broken up into 10 islands which pedestrian can walk between by crossing vehicular surfaces (see Fig. 5.71).

The space is dominated by car movement and part of it is used by the residents nearby as a parking. Figure 5-71 shows that car movement is well connected and observation showed that there are no traffic calming signs or other mechanisms when entering the old city. The area devoted to car movement is 70% of the whole area. According to an Old Damascus Directorate report (2005), this space is one of the areas that most suffer from traffic congestion because it is a point for cars and buses to park, enter and exit from the old city (there are 42 schools and 120 restaurants inside the old city).

According to the criteria developed in chapter 2, the space is not successfully designed for pedestrian movement because of poor accessibility, permeability and connectivity of the pedestrian areas within it and moreover, the space is dominated by car movement. This in turn affects the activities, particularly social activities. As seen in Chapter 2, here also the enlargement of movement space has diminished social space. Although parking space can be said to support certain socialising functions, these tend to be ephemeral and will move –i.e. people park their cars and move to their destinations leaving the space with cars and therefore, little will happen in the parking space with activity taking place in the destination space. As Gehl (1987) stated, the farther away from the [destination] space the cars are parked, the more will happen in the space, because slow traffic means lively space. In the case of *Bab Tuma*, social space has little room.

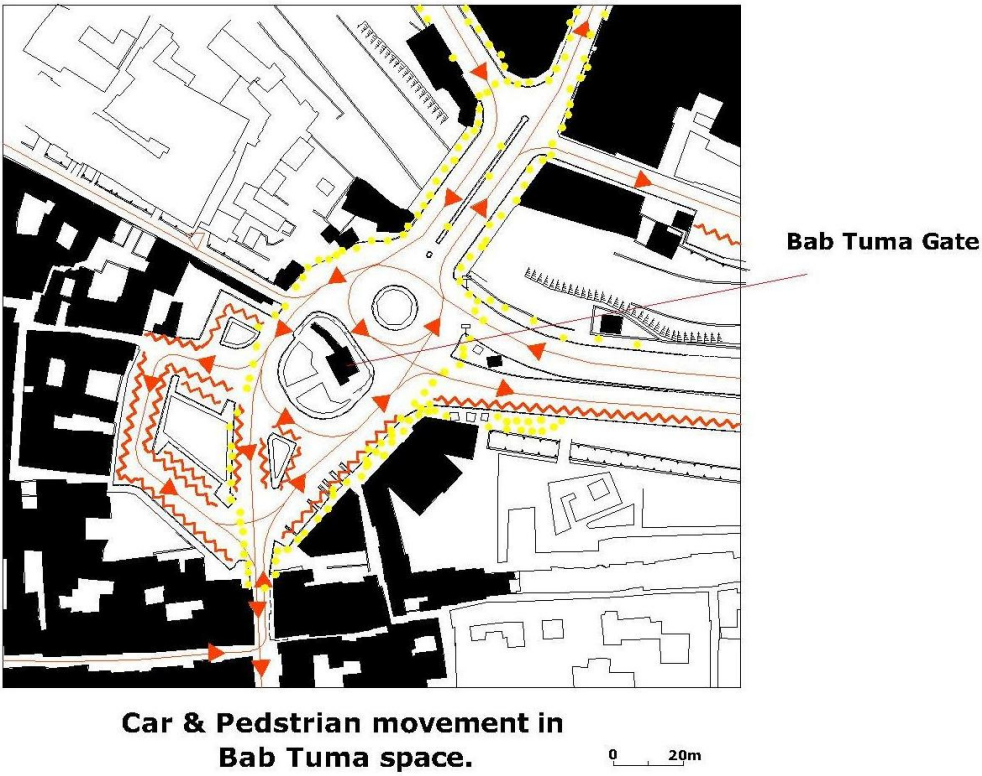


Figure 5.71 Vehicular and pedestrian areas in *Bab Tuma* space. Source: the researcher.

Use & activities

The space has five shops on the eastern side with two small cafes, one restaurant and administrative uses such as the police station and the *Bab Tuma* services department (see Fig. 5.72). The ground floor frontages are poor and moreover the western side of the space has a blank wall and discourages pedestrian activities. The space is used heavily during the day time in particular between 7-8.00 am and between 12-3:00 pm mainly by students and schoolchildren who passed the space on their way to their houses. From 5-9 pm the space is used by visitors and shoppers who pass through the space on their way to visit the historical amenities, and it is busy during the night, when it is used mainly as a car park by people going to the restaurants inside the old city.

Planting areas, mainly grass, are well distributed. They are accessible visually but not physically as they are separated by railings. Observation showed that vendors occupy the eastern corner near the bus stop, where they create a node of activity. People gather when they see other people around the vendors, but on the other hand this creates an obstacle for pedestrian movement. There is a change in level where the gate is located. Public art is absent. There are 4 benches near the gate, providing the only seating in the space, but they are rarely used. No playing area was noted. A pavement café opened in 2008 which creates a node of activity on the southern part of the space (see Fig. 5.72).

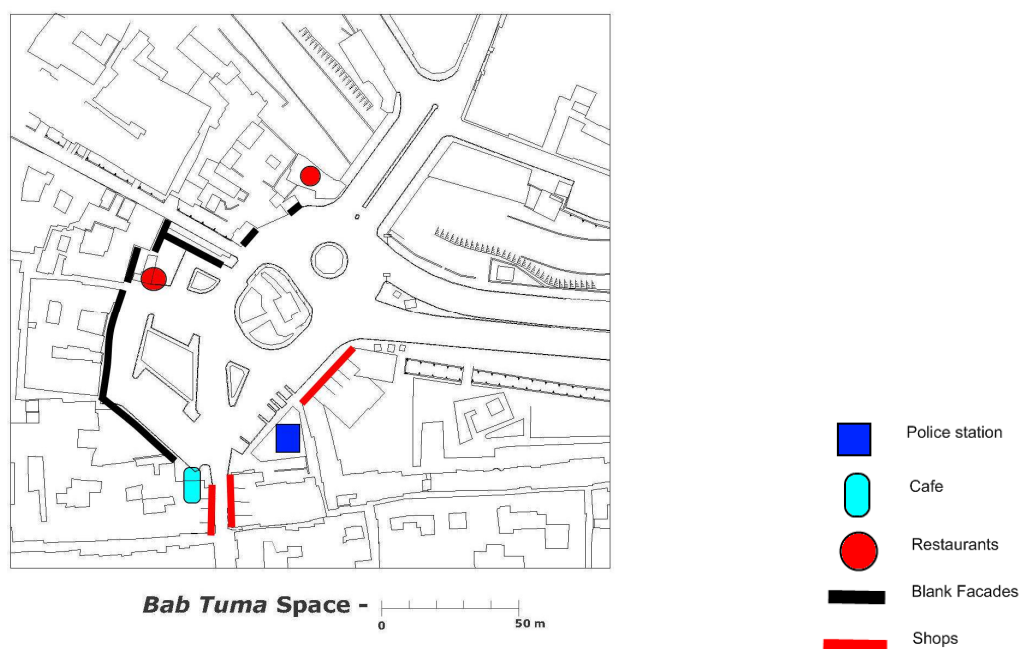


Figure 5.72 Uses in *Bab Tuma* space.
Source: the researcher.

Applying the criteria developed in Chapter 2, the space accommodates necessary activities such as going to school, work and waiting for the bus. Optional activities are rare as the space has poor quality. According to interviewees (nos. 7 and 25), the space is poorly designed and maintained, and furthermore, it suffers from noise and fumes from the vehicles and cars. Also the pollution of *Barada* River makes the situation worse. Generally, land use on perimeter of *Bab Tuma* space, use within the space and the activities happening there, are not very successful, suffering from low urban quality and limitation activities to the most necessary walks through the space, which people do on their way elsewhere.

Reflection

After analysis of *Bab Tuma* space from the morphological and functional perspectives, this reflection draws all together to understand the changes in the space. Back in history, the gate and the wall played the role of regulator of the relationship between the private sphere of the city and public sphere. Since 1850 and with the city expansion to the east and the opening up of the city to increased 'publicness', this expansion areas were different from organic form, it had stronger public/private divide and diminished parochial realm. The wall's role was still exercised and people used to move between the two different areas. (see Fig. 5.73). In the second half of the 20th century, the area witnessed the demolition of several houses surrounding the gate and parts of the wall, in order to open up this area and provide room for vehicular movement. So the strong public realm breaks through the wall. In addition, the enlargement of movement space brought about domination of the space by traffic and parking, thus having a negative influence on social space. This action transformed *Bab Tuma* space morphologically and functionally and changed the distinction between the two realms.

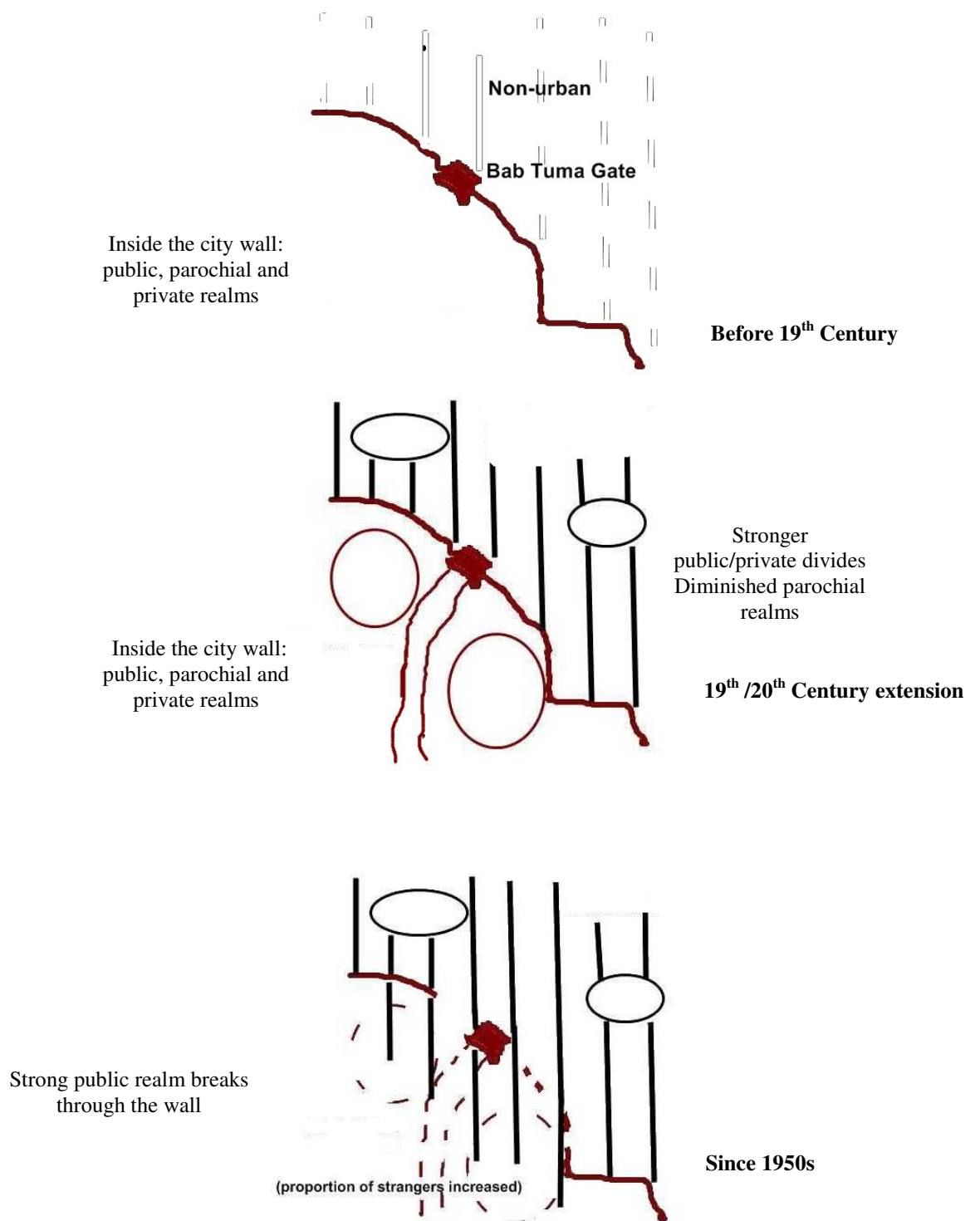


Figure 5.73 The transformation in the nature of *Bab Tuma* space.
Source: the researcher.

The transformation which happened in *Bab Tuma* space was based on the elimination of several private realms and the reduction of parochial realms to create a public space. *Bab Tuma* space is a local government-owned territory that it is supposed to be open to public access. During the second half of the 20th century, *Bab Tuma* space's functional aspects were significantly transformed – converting some courtyard houses into restaurants in the district surrounding the space and the open space itself into parking. Interviews carried out in 2009 confirmed that the local authority rented the space to a private company to be used as a car park. In addition, many restaurants' owners employ people to organize parking of the cars in the space. Meanwhile, residents in the *Bab Tuma* neighbourhood are allowed to park their cars in the space for two hours, after which they have to pay for parking. According to interviews (nos. 40, 41 & 42) undertaken with districts' representatives, it was noted that the space is not used enough by residents who live there. These changes are significant in influencing the space as a physical and social territory.

As a physical territory, the nature of the space has in recent years changed from public space to semi-public space as the local authority holds the power to control space accessibility. As a social territory, the proportion of 'strangers' using the space has increased. People who come to have a meal in one of the old city restaurants are considered 'strangers' to the space by the residents, whose views were put to the researcher (interview no.41) by the *Mokhtar* of *al Joura* neighbourhood (2873 resident) as follows: "these are strangers. Some of them do not adhere to appropriate behaviour in public space. A male and female walking hand in hand will be making a display of an intimate, possibly sexual relationship, which goes against the social norm in our society".

This transformation in *Bab Tuma* space reveals many things. It shows that the actor who holds the power (local authority) has had a significant role in making the distinction between public and private, both in terms of space and realm. It also clearly shows the danger of encroachment by private interests into the public realm and the threat of public intrusion into the private sphere. In *Bab Tuma* space, there is a close relationship between local government and business interest which affect the quality of the space as well as its urban life.

What is happening now in *Bab Tuma* space highlights the conflict over who has got the power to organize the space and for what means. It also exemplifies a potential tension between different values: traditional, use and exchange. The traditional values expressed by the *mokhtar* of how this space should be used saw some activities happening in the space as belonging to the private realm. The potential use of the space as a rest area would be of great value to the community, as one *Bab Tuma* residents' representative (interviewee no.41) explained when he was asked how he would like *Bab Tuma* space to be: "We want it empty of cars, quiet, with many places to rest, relax and enjoy. We want place for children to play and socialize". On the other hand, the space has become a generator of rent for the local authority and the restaurant's owners in the area nearby, for whom the space represents "a commodity for buying, selling, or renting to somebody else" (Madanipour, 1996, p.130).

This needs further investigation, first however, a main conclusion from this chapter is provided and then there is a need to look at the governance process of the space to know the actors, rule and the rationale to deal with these spaces, which chapter 6 is about.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter traced the historical evolution of public space and public realm in Damascus in order to understand the changes in their nature, with a focus on morphological and functional aspects of public space. The historical development of public space in Damascus shows a change from it being a core arena for most public activities and for civic or public life in the Roman period, to becoming what we now see as 'traditional' public space, which developed within the organic urban form of the Islamic and Ottoman periods under strong cultural and social rules and was more subtly hierarchical. These spaces ranged from public to semi-public to semi-private and private spaces. Socialising activities at the city level were centred on the main market, Friday Mosque and Sunday church. At the neighbourhood level, socialising activities were concentrated in indoor environments and were practised by small groups of the population with strong social relations between each other. So private and parochial realms were dominant at the neighbour level and at the city level as a whole. In terms of the interaction between activities in, and movement through, the more public of these spaces, movement did not interfere with socialising activities because it was predominantly limited to that of pedestrians and animals.

Modernity entered Damascus through colonialism and was expressed physically in the urban development of the city. This development was formalised through the introduction of a few new planning institutions. New buildings forms appeared along wide streets which connected new centres in the areas of expansion. The nature of public spaces changed, witnessing increasing numbers of strangers coming from different expanded parts of the city. New types of public space such as parks, avenues and boulevards were created. These new public spaces became the stage for some of the socialising activities which had previously tended to be related to private space. All these new changes in public spaces could be summarised as an increasing exposure of public spaces to 'publicness' and the beginning of the subordination of public space to the intensive movement of vehicles.

In the post independence period, Damascus initially struggled to establish a political stability in which the state became active in both the urban planning and urban development processes. Under the modernist paradigm, and within the context of a socialist state, the planning and evolution of city space was guided by the use of 'master plans' tool to organise the space through zoning and the creation of open public space. The incomplete implementation of this modernist approach resulted in open spaces which now need to be redesigned and upgraded. These spaces are usually characterised by the enlargement of movement space and poor socialising activities. Analysis of specific public spaces showed the clash between modernisation and tradition. In broad terms, the new paradigm, which had a new approach to conceptualising and designing public spaces, was used to deal with 'traditional' public space, thus altering traditional uses and values. This has happened through the transformation of their morphological and functional aspects to modernise them by removing the old uses and activities and introducing new encounters. All of these new modernising aspects are still struggling with the old ones to find a way to settle together.

Chapter 6 The governance process over public space at the local level in the historic fabric of Damascus

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the historical development of public space and public realm in the historic fabric of Damascus, including a qualitative assessment of two public open spaces (product). In this chapter, the researcher explores the governance process whereby public spaces in historic Damascus 'where old and new meet' are produced and transformed, in order to address the following questions:

- 3a) Who are the main actors involved in the governance process of the current public spaces in the historic fabric? What are their responsibilities and roles? What are their capacities?
- 3b) What are the rules of the governance process? How do the actors interact within these rules?
- 3c) What are the rationalities they use? How are the actors thinking about public space in historic Damascus? What perceptions and attitudes do they hold and how do these link to their governance?

There is a grey literature produced by the key actors and planning institutions which explains their roles and responsibilities and which is not widely available to the public. However, there is no document that links them up to explain the relationship with public spaces in the historic fabric and to show the process of interaction between these to manage or improve these spaces. Therefore, a key research contribution in this chapter is to draw these together and to interpret how such interaction affects the public spaces.

In order to fulfil this objective, informal meetings as well as semi-structured interviews were held with people in government departments, academic bodies, professionals and planners. Some of these interviews were carried out in November 2005 and December 2006/January 2007 to establish preliminary data about the governance process. A more detailed field trip was made during September/October 2007 which helped the researcher to achieve the main objective of this chapter (see chapter 3).

The chapter begins by defining the main actors involved in the governance process, both at national level and then focusing on Damascus. The chapter then moves on to discuss the rules which govern the process and the rationales used by the actors involved. Lastly, the researcher used the data from grey literature and interviews to analyse different possible scenarios of processes happening in *Bab Tuma* space which to some extent are applicable to the citadel space.

6.2 Actors

The different groups of actors involved in the governance process are public authorities, civil society and the private sector.

6.2.1 Public authorities

National government

The Syrian government is highly centralised, so central government's role ranges from the strategic level to the local level. At the national level, the State Planning Committee (SPC) prepares five year plans for social, economic and environmental development, in cooperation with related government organisations. The governmental institutions involved in the governance process of the historic fabric in urban areas mainly include the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of *Awqaf* (Religious Endowments), the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Housing & Construction and the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MLAE).

The Ministry of Culture through its Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) is the main actor involved in the preservation of built heritage. DGAM has the responsibility for listing historic areas or historic buildings, for which it prepares listing proposals. Each proposal contains a rapid documentation of the site as well as a written statement of importance. Eventually, a historic listing is registered through a decree from the Ministry of Culture, which is ratified by a decision of the Higher Council of Antiquities (CORPUS Levant team, 2004).

The national office of the DGAM are authorised to set national policies, regulate major interventions, prepare final budgets, approve restoration projects carried out directly or by the DGAM or under its supervision, and prepare protection decrees to be issued by

the Ministry. The local branches supervise the issuing of permits, guard listed sites, and design and implement restoration projects financed by the DGAM. In general all major and critical decisions are referred to the main national office, as most of the competent experts working with the DGAM are located in the headquarters (CORPUS Levant team, 2004).

Another important institution concerned with antiquities is the Ministry of *Awqaf*. *Awqaf* is the Muslim system established to provide for sustainable financing of religious activities and social charities. Revenues from endowments are used to support charitable activities and to preserve, maintain, and develop the endowments and ensure their sustainability. In 1949 the Syrian government cancelled individual endowments and grouped them under the guise of the Ministry of *Awqaf*. The *Awqaf* became the single largest landholder in the Country.

The Ministry of Tourism has recently come into the picture as tourism is set to play a greater role in the Syrian economy, with a number of positive developments taking place on the international stage combined with greater government investment and awareness of the sector's potential. The Ministry advocates developing historic zones into tourist destinations. It has both the role of a promoter as well as regulator of tourism activities. It has also recently discovered the advantage of promoting sites of vernacular architecture as a potential for attracting tourism. Its role in identifying such sites is increasingly prominent (CORPUS Levant team, 2004).

The activity of urban planning was shared by two ministries when Syria witnessed the creation of the main institutions of the current Syrian state after the Correction Movement in 1970. The Ministry of Housing and Utilities³³ was responsible for policy making and the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MLAE) for implementation. The first proposal to transfer the activity of urban planning to be fully handled by the MLAE was in 1997, which has been reviewed in 2000 and implemented in 2004 by Legislative Decree No. 64.

Another institution concerned with urban development at national level is the General Company for Engineering and Consulting (GCEC), which belongs to the Ministry of

³³ The Ministry of Housing and Construction (MoHC) was created by the Legislative Decree No.7/ 2003 to replace two ministries: the Ministry of Housing and Utilities and the Ministry of Construction and Reconstruction.

Housing & Construction (MoHC). GCEC was established in 1980 according to the Legislative Decree No. 28051. The main responsibilities of the company are to study, design, and supervise the implementation of engineering projects; to carry out preliminary and final receipt of projects; and provide expertise and professional advice and representation in the work of official bodies and arbitration for public-sector projects.

This review of the main organisations at the national level reveals that the responsibility for urban planning and management of historic areas in general is shared mainly by the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MLAE) and the Ministry of Culture, through their governorates and different directorates at local level, which will be elaborated on in the following section.

Local government

The local administrative structure in the Syrian Arab Republic is divided into administrative units which are: a province or a governorate or *muhafazat* (singular: *muhafazah*) (of which there are 14), a city (109), a town (284), a village (207) and a rural unit (854) (see appendix 6.1 for more details on local administration, and figure 6.1). Law 15/1971 of local administration³⁴ governs the processes through which these administrative units operate. Every administrative unit has its council. This council consists of members who are chosen by all electors in the administrative unit via direct secret ballot (see appendix 6.2 for details of the electoral system). Each local council has its executive office whose members are selected by central government from among the members of its council.

A governor, whose appointment is proposed by the minister of the interior, approved by the cabinet, and announced by executive decree, heads each governorate. The minister of local administration works with each governor to coordinate and supervise local

³⁴ The Law assigned the responsibilities of economy, culture, services and all citizens' affairs at administrative units to the Local Administration. It transferred the relevant responsibilities to the local authorities whereby the role of central authorities will be limited to planning, legislation, organisation, introduction of modern technology, monitoring, training, coordination, follow-up and implementation of major projects that are beyond the capacity of local communities or important by nature to all citizens. (Source: <http://www.planning.gov.sy>).

development projects. Figure 6.2 illustrates the location of local government in the hierarchy of the Syrian government.

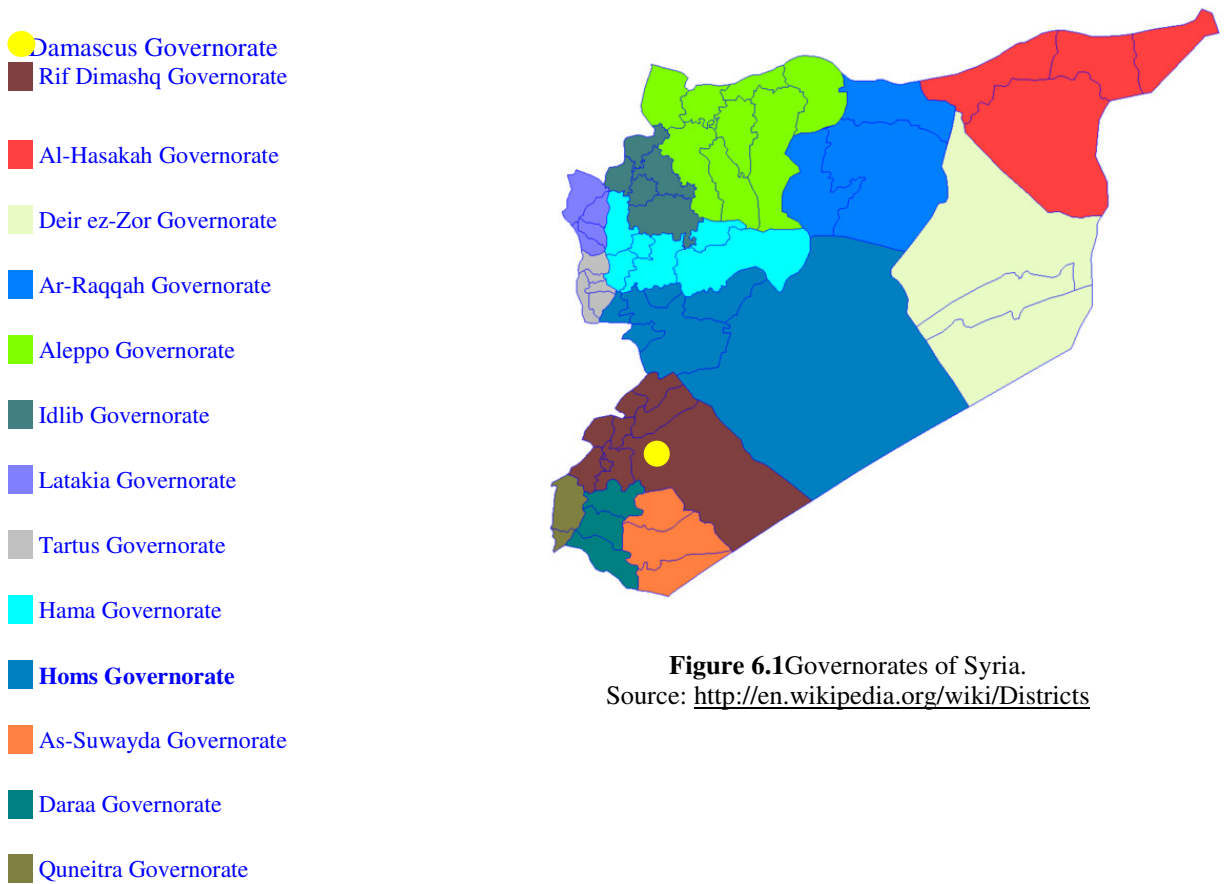


Figure 6.1 Governorates of Syria.
 Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Districts>

The structure of the Damascus governorate consists of a governorate council, executive office and the different directorates. A governorate council is composed of 30 - 100 members calculated on the basis of one representative for every 10,000 citizens (see appendix 6.2). The governorate council holds a wide range of jurisdictions under the local Administration Law of 1971. Particularly, they hold an executive role within their jurisdictions. This role is fulfilled through an executive office consisting of ten members who are appointed by the central government from among the council's elected members. Each executive officer is charged with specific functions (Fig. 6.3).

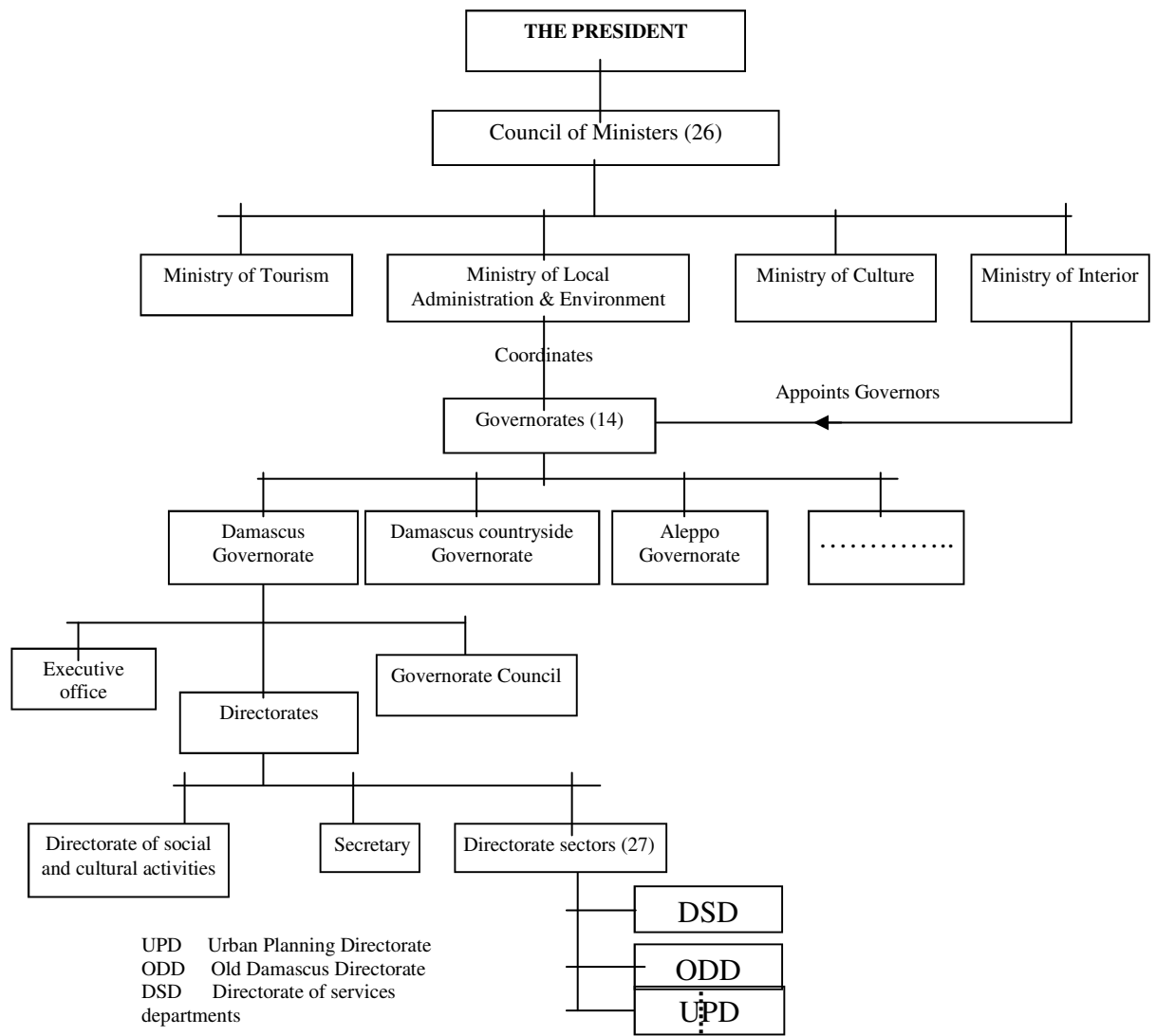


Figure 6.2 Central and local government hierarchy, with a focus on Damascus.
 Source: Grey literature collected by the author.

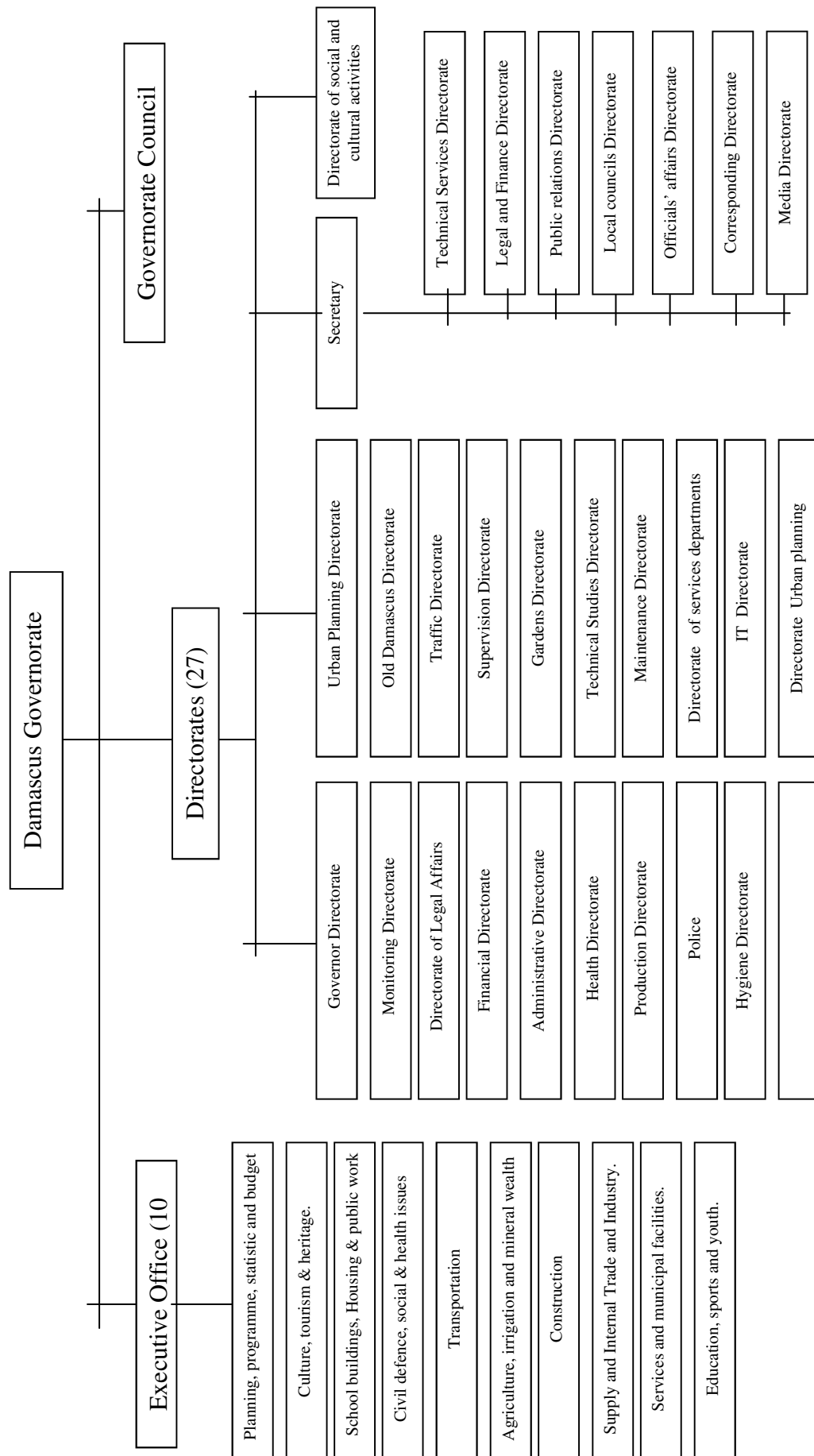


Figure 6.3 Structure of Damascus Governorate.
Grey literature collected by the author.

Each governorate is responsible for the development in administration, health, social services, education, public works, construction and planning aspects. Before 1975 Damascus Governorate consisted of 5 directorates: Legal; Technical Studies; Financial; Administrative; and Hygiene and Health. The Directorate of Technical Studies was devoted to planning activity only. Since 2000 Damascus Governorate has 27 directorates. Each one has responsibility for a specific activity both inside and outside the old city. Urban planning activity, however, is shared by two directorates: the Urban Planning Directorate (UPD) for the areas outside the city wall and Old Damascus Directorate (ODD) for the Old city (see appendix 6.9 for the structure of ODD).

The Directorate of the Service departments (DSD) is responsible for maintenance and management of public spaces. According to grey literature collected by the researcher during the fieldtrip in 2006, it consists of 11 service departments which monitor 62 neighbourhoods within Damascus Governorate. Each service department monitors a number of neighbourhoods ranging from 1 to 12. Table 6.1 gives the name of services departments, the area and the number of neighbourhoods under their responsibility³⁵.

No. of service department	Service department name	Area (ha)	No. of neighbourhoods
1	Rkn al Din	476	6
2	Mohagerin	438	5
3	Al Mazeh	2191	6
4	Kanawat	297	8
5	Al Kadam	551	7
6	Shaghour	1000	12
7	Sarouja	378	7
8	Yarmouk camp	240	4
9	Joubar	906	3
10	Barzeh+ Aboun	1268	3
11	Dumar	2260	1
Total area of Service departments		10005	62

Table 6.1 Services departments in Damascus.

The historic fabric in and around the city centre is located within the highlighted ones.

Source: Information gathered from GCEC (1997) and JICA (1999).

³⁵ The information presented in table 6.1 is based on available data gathered from reports prepared in 1997 & 1999. The researcher got new information about the administrative structure of DSD in 2009, at the time of writing the full draft of the thesis, by telephone interviews with two officials during March 2009. The new information states that DSD consists of 15 service departments.

The service department (*Daeret Khadamat*) consists of a manager and 3 engineers. It is responsible for providing services to a particular area and to stop informal buildings. Two engineers are responsible for dealing with enforcement of planning regulations and one engineer is responsible for simple maintenance, participation in supervision of big projects undertaken in the area and preventing vendors from occupying the pavements. The SD is also responsible for hold a monthly meeting with the area's neighbourhood's representative. It is also responsible for preparing an annual plan for the upgrading of its area.

One of the important actors at the local level is the local protection committee (LPC), which was formed because of the necessity for a joint committee which includes multisectoral representatives. It is a supervisory body responsible for overseeing and preserving the registered historical areas, including the responsibility for open spaces. It is an ad-hoc committee formed through prime ministerial decree no. 2117 / 2007, emphasising an executive approach towards administrating historic sites. Its president is the governor and it is formed by representatives which include the main public authorities concerned (Antiquities, Tourism,...etc) and some sectors of civil society (The Faculty of Architecture, Friends of Damascus Association) as well as some other experts, and public or private bodies as the committee needs. The committee is given the authority to prepare guidelines and plans for conservation, rehabilitation and documentation as well as to ensure social and economic development for the residents. The committee is responsible for the old city as well as the areas outside the city walls.

In summary, the local government role in development of public open spaces is divided among three directorates: UPD, ODD and DSD. While the role of UPD and ODD is to design these spaces, DSD's role is to manage and maintain public spaces, 'control' development of buildings and the use of public spaces, and sometimes to participate in supervision of a project. UPD, ODD and DSD are involved in designing the master plan as well as the detailed plans. After being proposed by the Governorate's Executive office, the master plan needs to be ratified by the MLAE, while detailed plans need to be ratified by Governorate council.

6.2.2 Civil society

According to the Programme of Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR) website, article 39 of the Syrian Constitution grants citizens the right to meet and demonstrate peacefully, in accordance with the law. Also, the “popular sectors” may establish “unionist, social, professional organizations, and production cooperatives,” by virtue of Article 48 of the constitution. Article 49 further rules that such organisations must work towards building a socialist Arab society and defending its system; planning and guiding a socialist economy; and popularly supervising the machinery of government (www.pogar.org). Civil society includes organisations such as NGOs, teams of academics, professional organisations, and organised and non-organised residents. According to Arab Decision website³⁶, the civil society system in Syria consists of political parties (28), Unions & Professional Associations (20), Job Creators Groups: Chambers of Commerce and Industry (6) and social organisations (21).

The government is now taking NGOs seriously because of their benefits and also because they constitute an integral tool in the development of the country. Syrian legislation dating back to 1959 allows charities to work in the country, and was amended in 1974 to give them tax exemption. However, no legislation covers NGOs specifically under Syrian law as it stands (ES, 2005).

Among the relevant NGOs is the Friend of Damascus Association (FDA), founded in 1977 by a group of writers, engineers, lawyers and other professionals, particularly concerned with the development of the historic fabric of Damascus. Its main goal is the protection of Damascus and its historical heritage through cooperation with relevant government bodies. However, critics see this institution as an inefficient actor in the process (Salamandra, 2004).

Salamandra (2004, p.80, 81) wrote about FDA and the shift of its practice from working for the sake of the old city to a cultural and touristic one and from activism to socialising. Her aim was to highlight the distinctions between old and new elites. Moreover Salamandra’s investigation revealed the changes in FDA priorities to “growing accommodation between old elite ideals and new market demands, as high-

³⁶ The objective of Arab Decision site is to make available to citizens and general public useful information on the Institutions of the Arab World (www.arabdecision.org).

rise apartment blocks housing many families generate more profits than Arab-style houses”.

An article by *Khaled al Faham* in the local press (2007), discussed the shift in the FDA’s policy and its failure in being an efficient actor responsible for the development of the historical fabric. *Al Faham* related such failure to the conflicts among members of its administration body and mismanagement of the cultural and social events as well as the available resources and communications. All of that has contributed to the organisation’s failure in getting laws passed to protect large areas of the historic fabric.

During the researcher’s field work none of the interviewees mentioned the organisation as an active actor in the process. It has a very small space to participate in the process through its representatives in the LPC mentioned in section 6.2.1. Even this role has been criticised by Old City activists, who noted that the organisation was somewhat successful in protecting buildings within the Old City walls, but failed to protect large areas outside the wall. However, some of FDA’s members have argued that their efforts are hampered by Damascus Governorate (Salamandra, 2004).

Residents and users are directly concerned with the state of the historic fabric. These are the people who use and visit the buildings and the spaces of the historic fabric, and the owners of historic properties. The law does not deprive the owners of the lawful ownership and use of their properties, but they are faced with highly bureaucratic procedures and cumbersome restrictions in order to develop their properties, this “leading to a general resentment and antagonism towards antiquities and ordinance and authorities” (CORPUS Levant team, 2004).

As for academic bodies, these include academics and academic institutions such as the Faculty of Architecture and the French Institute of Arabic Studies, which constitute an important source of information, studies, reports and surveys in particular for the old city and historic zones.

Current practices of governance at neighbourhood level

Currently Damascus is divided into 62 small neighbourhoods. The average size of the neighbourhood in Damascus is 24,000 inhabitants (JICA, 1999). Historically, the neighbourhoods were defined according to gate (*Bab Tuma, Bab al Salam, Bab al Barid* etc.), religion, craft (profession) or popular leader. The definition of neighbourhoods today still relies on the historic ones.

Each neighbourhood has a representative body consisting of a *Mokhtar* and a Neighbourhood Committee (usually 7-13 members) appointed by the Executive Bureau of the City (interviewees suggested that these committees and *Mokhtars* are sometimes proposed by the local branch of the Ba'ath Party in each neighbourhood). A decree is issued by the local/central government to approve the appointment of the *Mokhtar*. They live in the neighbourhood and are known by people due to their good reputation. The *Mokhtar* has a small office located within the neighbourhood provided by the local authority (Damascus governorate), which also provides the necessary facilities such as a computer, paper, stationery and furniture.

A *Mokhtar* has a semi-official role within his neighbourhood. He is a neighbourhood representative as well as a government representative within the neighbourhood, having responsibilities in relation to: birth, death and marriage certificates; issues around foreigners, school attendance, military service and permission for a child to travel without his/her father; approval for people moving to a new address; and helping authorities such as the Ministry of Justice and the police.

The committee and the *Mokhtar* hold a meeting every two weeks in the *Mokhtar*'s office to discuss their neighbourhood's problems, needs and concerns and to propose improvements. The notes of their meetings are used to discuss such issues in the monthly meetings held with the SD in one of the local authority's departments.

Another organisation for residents is the resident's association. Law 55/2002 was issued to set in place the procedures needed to elect residents' associations which manage their properties – including individual properties, public (streets and pavement) and shared (building entrances, stairs, roofs, corridors, lifts etc).

In conclusion, FDA, residents, users and academic bodies identified so far, are the civil society actors concerned with the historic fabric. While FDA and academic bodies have a role in the process, this is very limited, through participation in committees such as the LPC. Academic bodies provide a centre for documentation and information. Neighbourhood committees and *Mokhtars* are residents' representatives. These can be seen as being located between civil society and local authority, as they are members from the community as well as appointed by the local authority.

6.2.3 Market agencies

The Syrian economy has undergone many changes since independence (see appendix 6.3). The participation of the private sector in the development process was very limited until the second *infatih*³⁷ in 1986-87, since which the role of the private sector began to grow in the national economy (Perthes, 1994). This economic reform was needed because the public sector failed to become an engine of capital accumulation which was powerful enough to finance the state's commitments, and so to reduce the state's economic burdens (Perthes 1994: 44-71; Hinnebusch, 2001a; ES, 2005).

However, the public sector remained essential to avoid excessive economic dependency on the market – before much of one was in place, as it was believed that only once private sector investment could absorb the resulting unemployment, the public sector reform could progress (Sukkar, 1994, p.26-43).

The country is still experiencing many economic reforms in an attempt to achieve a full transformation from a centralised command economy to a social market economy, with the main government objective being to make a comprehensive reform process (Prime Minister of Syria in interview by OBG (ES, 2005). The economy has continued its expansion (an average of 7-8% per annum of real growth), due to a relaxation of economic controls and increased domestic investment and private sector growth. The

³⁷ “The term *infatih* has become common currency in the Arab World. It refers, generally, to policies that increase the weight of the private sector, open economies up internationally, involve a greater reliance on market forces and may include public sector reforms” (Perthes, 1994).

introduction of Investment Law No. 10³⁸ formed the cornerstone of the government's turn towards the private sector (ES, 2005).

Sabagh (2007) noted the economic developments that have been achieved in the last seven years: a 113% increase in government budget (to US\$12,6 billion), a twelvefold increase in investments and a doubling in Syrian exports, between 2000 and 2007. Moreover the Five-Year Plan (FYP) 2006-2010 emphasised the active participation of the private sector through focusing on piloting productive and services activities.

The above brief review sheds some light on the economic situation. The groups that could be included as market agencies which have a role in the historic fabric include developers, restaurant keepers, hotel keepers and shopkeepers who are organised into Professional Associations, Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The changes in the historic fabric from a residential use to accommodate more business activities other than traditional ones is driven by “developers with an eye to the vast profits to be made” (Degeorge, 2004, p. 290).

Another influence which affected the old city and was driven by market forces is that many families built high-rise apartment blocks housing instead of the traditional houses in order to generate greater profits (Salamandra, 2004). This in turn affected the townscape of the old city and led to incompatibility between the traditional and modern structure. “Much of it is of very poor architectural quality and badly built” (Hasan, 1998, p.34).

All restaurants and bars that have replaced the residential houses are evidence of market influence which is affecting the historic fabric: “In the meantime, it has been the market that has taken the lead in old Damascus. Restaurants and bars are proliferating in neighborhoods like *Bab Tuma*” (ES, 2006, p. 87). However, officials from UPD and ODD assured in interviews that no more permissions to open new schools and restaurants inside the historic fabric are being given, until the new development plan is ready to define the suitable places for these activities without interfering with the

³⁸ Law No. 10 (1991), which encourages investment in the country, allowed foreign or Syrian investors to hold foreign currency (Zisser, 2007). Introduced to encourage productive investment, this accelerated private sector growth in relative and absolute terms and had a significant impact on Syria's economic performance (Polling, 1994).

residential use. This has been confirmed by the executive office member who is responsible for the tourism, culture and heritage sector in the local press (*Kadoury*, 2008).

From the above presentation of the different actors, it is evident that there is a diversity of actors and organisations. While the public authority has a leading role in the process, the market has a strong role as well. Civil society actors are defined as residents, professionals, academics, NGOs – though these are little involved in the processes around public spaces, FDA, neighbourhood committees and *Mokhtars* do participate in these. The following section discusses the actors' capacities.

6.2.4 Capacities

The limitations of financial resources as well as the lack of qualified cadres were frequently emphasised by many interviewees. The World Heritage periodic report 2000-03 revealed that the Syrian Arab Republic is among the 64% of the states that mentioned the need for financial, logistical and technical resources. Also the report highlighted the lack of funding hampering the development of training courses as a main problem. However, the report explained that “the provision of funds cannot be a substitute for the lack of human resources, including qualified professional staff, researchers or scientific personnel. The identification of the needs of each State Party is required to develop solutions and new strategies, and should be given more thought” (World Heritage Periodic Report, 2000-03, p.22).

DGAM officials argued that the available funds are barely sufficient to support upgrading and improving of historical sites. Moreover, the capacity of the Ministry of culture is very low:

“The Ministry of Culture is one of the least endowed institutions in the country. With a total personnel count not exceeding 4000 employees (more than 50% have not completed high school) the capacity of the Ministry is in no position to support the complex and demanding mandate of its largest department: the DGAM” (CORPUS Levant team, 2004, p.29).

In July 2008 the governor of Damascus in his presentation declared that the budget of the governorate, £SY 2.4 billion (US\$ 51.6 million at the Commercial Bank of Syria

official rate), is insufficient to resolve the complex urban problems of Damascus and to support the demanding needs of the city (*Al Kahf*, 2008).

Many officials reported the problem of low payment and lack of incentives, which leads them to work in a second job even though wages have been raised many times since 2000 (by 125 % overall) (*Sabagh*, 2007). Sometimes skilled officials move to the private sector, which pays higher salaries and the public sector becomes a refuge for unskilled officials, as one interviewee explained. This affects the public sector's efficiency. In an interview with the head of the European Commission's Delegation to Syria in ES (2006), he noted that the public sector still plays a great role in the economy. However, it is not productive.

Lack of financial resources and qualified cadres still present a problem in urban development. This was raised by the interviewees and confirmed through the specific literature. The next section discusses the general rules of interaction between the actors in the governance process focusing on the geographic areas of responsibility, legislation and procedures and financing.

6.3 Rules of the governance process

A quotation from a World Heritage Periodic Report (2000-2003, p.18) on the government system and institutions in Arab countries is very apposite to give a picture of the structure they interact with:

“the institutional framework in the Arab Region was very centralized and lacked ‘horizontal’ coordination between the governmental institutions and the services in charge of the conservation of the properties, especially at the local level”.

Generally speaking, the governmental system is very centralised and complex. This is evident from the above review of grey literature, including recently published reports. For example the 10th Five Year Plan (2006-10) (10th FYP, p.1) noted the problem of strong centralisation, which limited the role of local authorities and ‘control of financing mechanisms of local plan’, arguing that the practical implementation of the local administration Law 15/1971 did not fulfil the expectations, which “led to preparation of a new draft law for local administration which will avoid the obstacles that hindered the

application of the previous law over 34 years. The new draft law is under discussion by the legislative authorities for ratification”.

This sets the context for this subsection, which is organised in three parts: geographic areas of responsibility; legislation and procedures; and financing.

6.3.1 Geographic areas of responsibility

In 1979 UNESCO announced Old Damascus within the wall as a World Heritage site and a special department in the Damascus administration was devoted to Old City matters (*Maktab Anbar*), which became Old Damascus Directorate in 2000 as stated above. Special local Law 826/1996 defines the guidelines for any restoration, alteration and rebuilding inside the city walls such as: joint approval by the technical committee and protection committee is required for any alteration; the exclusive use of traditional materials (wood, sun-dried brick, stucco etc); a prohibition on raising roofs and the obligation to adhere to the cadastral survey of 1926-27.

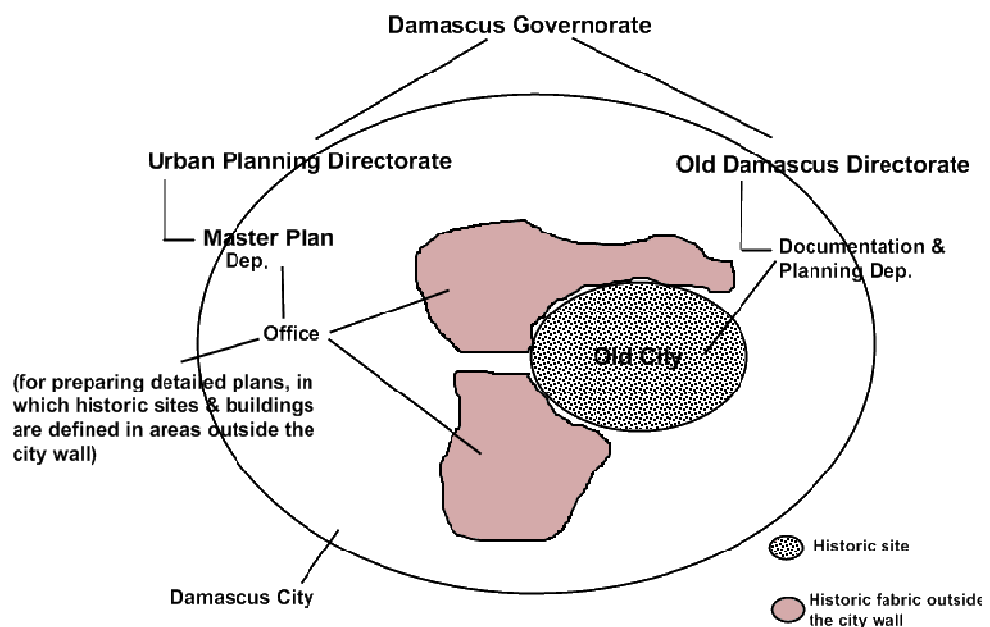


Figure 6.4 Geographic areas of responsibility allocated to different local government agencies before 2005.
Source: the researcher.

The authorities have not defined a buffer zone for the Old City of Damascus, but there are some historical neighbourhoods located outside the city wall similar to the historic fabric inside the wall (see chapter 5). Before 2005, these neighbourhoods were under the responsibility of an office related to the Master Plan Department (MPD) which belongs officially to UPD (see Fig. 6.4). These neighbourhoods are within “Zone K” in which the law allows commercial activities on the ground floor and three floors height. Therefore, commercial activities have spread throughout these formerly residential quarters.

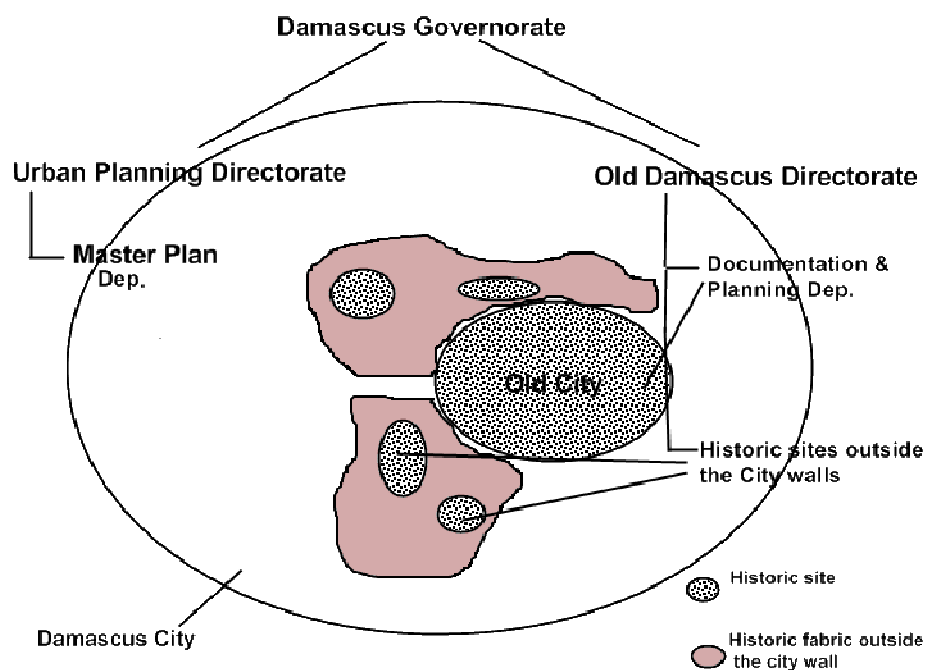


Figure 6.5 Geographic areas of responsibility allocated to different local government agencies since 2007.
Source: the researcher

During 2007 there was a transition time in which responsibilities were being transferred. Damascus Governorate asked Old Damascus Directorate to commission a study to evaluate the historical values of the buildings in these neighbourhoods. As a result Damascus Governorate has defined some sites as local heritage sites within these historical neighbourhoods. The law that should follow for the new historical sites has not been defined (see Fig. 6.5); moreover, the office responsible for these sites was officially transferred to Old Damascus Directorate in the form of an Outside City Wall Department.

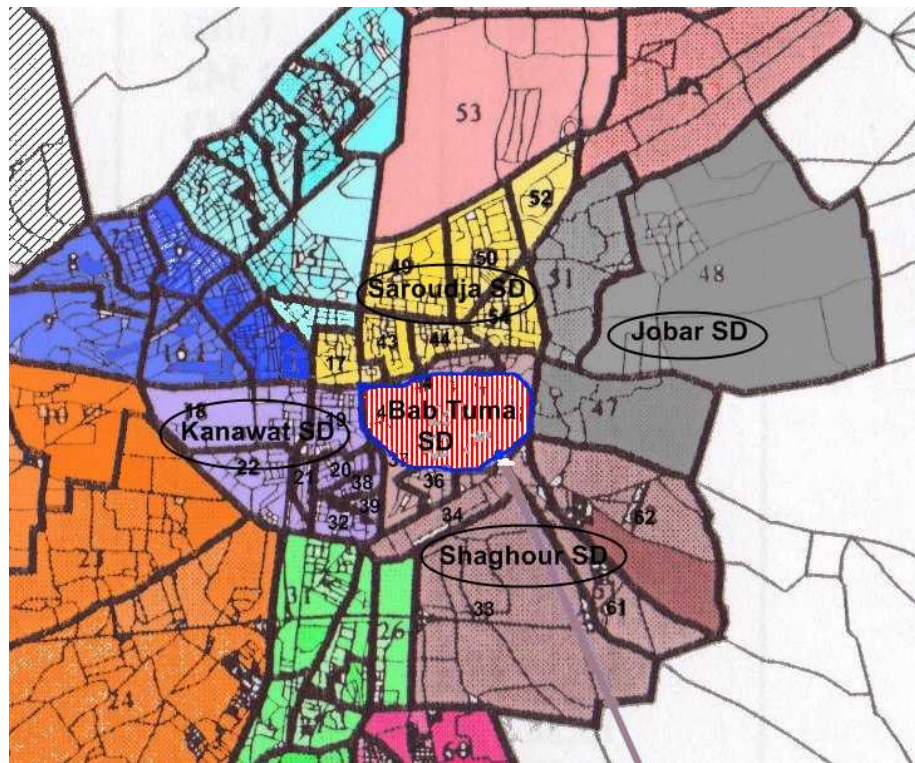


Figure 6.6 Geographic areas of responsibility allocated to 15 service departments in Damascus.

Source: Adapted by the researcher based on information from JICA (1999) and officials in *Bab Tuma* SD.

For managing public spaces, Damascus has been divided into 15 areas, monitored by 15 service departments. The Old City is located within one service department which is the *Bab Tuma* Service Department. The areas outside the city wall fall under the jurisdiction of four services departments, two of which cover the historical extra muros neighbourhoods on the northern and western side: *Saroudja* Service Department and *Kanawat* SD respectively (see Fig. 6.6).

In this section, geographic areas of different administrative bodies have been identified. It is noted that more attention has been given to the old city by firstly including it in the list of World Heritage sites and secondly by establishing a separate administrative body (ODD) responsible for it with special legislation. Investigation showed that defining these geographic locations is rather problematic, as each body focuses on its own administratively defined area, considering adjacent areas with similar characteristics and issues as out with its responsibility. This is particularly problematic for the spaces on

the edge of the Old City, as one space can be monitored and managed by a number of administrative bodies (see section 6.5.2).

6.3.2 Legislation and procedures

Two sets of legislation codes are important in relation to cultural heritage and urban planning in Syria: Law 222/1963 (amended in 1969, 1974 and 1999), and Law on urban planning 5/1982 (amended in 2002). Law No. 222 is the main regulatory legislative device for protecting cultural heritage related artefacts. Law No.5 is the main law governing the process of urban planning and prescribes the procedure for master plan preparation.

The main Antiquities Law No.222 stated the definition, the condition and the classification for considering heritage materials. It identifies the age of 200 years old as a condition for the materials to be placed under protection. It also divides them into two groups: movable and immovable, such as built form heritage. These are classified by claiming technical and artistic qualities, or for important historical events. Architectural heritage can be old neighbourhoods, individual monuments or archaeological sites. (CORPUS Levant team, 2004).

What is not clear in the law is the definition of area conservation as this has become important after admission of the old city of Damascus into the World Heritage list in 1979. Demarcation of site boundaries is often based on old cadastral records which were prepared during the period of the French Mandate (the 1920's and 1930's). The first lists of historic buildings and sites were produced in the late 19th century; attached to the Ottoman antiquities law was a list of sites deemed important historically. After that, an extensive list of the main urban monuments and archaeological sites was prepared in mandate period. In the post independence era, the DGAM has continued to prepare such lists incrementally (CORPUS Levant team, 2004).

Once a zone or a building is listed, the cadastral records for the plots affected are modified to include a legal injunction of historic protection. The local authorities review and consult these records prior to issuing building permits and any planning work. The injunction would require the approval of the local DGAM branch before any public or

private work is allowed. The DGAM also inspects these to verify the adherence to protection ordinances (CORPUS Levant team, 2004).

The above review was for Law no. 222: procedures for protection and classification. According to Law 5/ 1982 the relevant administrative unit initiates the process of preparing master plans as well as detailed plans. Damascus Governorate, through its Technical Services Directorate (TSD) and UPD prepares a ‘planning brief’³⁹ to be evaluated and approved by the MLAE within 20 days. UPD and TSD are not able to carry out the procedures to produce the master plan and the detailed plans independently because they are highly cumbersome. To address this, The Damascus governorate signs a contract with GCEC⁴⁰ (a regional technical company) to draw up a master plan. This system works for all administrative units throughout the country.

After receiving the approval from MLAE, the plan is sent to the Governorate Council in Damascus Governorate to be approved and accepted for advertisement. If the Council has comments on the plan, these will be noted and sent to TSD to be formally documented and reviewed by the Regional Technical Committee (RTC). This committee has the governor as its president, and it consists of the specific member of the executive office, the director of ODD, the director of UPD, two representatives from the MLAE, a legal consultant (appointed by the governor) and one professional (appointed by the governor). RTC has the right to refuse and accept any of the comments from the Governorate Council and, in cases where there is a conflict among the members’ of the committee, this conflict is forwarded to the minister to decide about it. The plan then is advertised for public participation in the main Damascus Governorate building for a period of 30 days. An invitation is sent to people who will be affected by the plan to look at it (or this is done through two local newspapers). The public can send their comments and objections to the governorate.

The objections are documented by the Technical Services Directorate and reviewed by the RTC, which prepares a formal document. In the case of acceptance of objections,

³⁹ Planning brief is a document which covers issues about the current situation of urban settlements and their future urban needs. These issues are related to population statistics, density, services and building needs, housing units, current and future road network and public facilities.

⁴⁰ GCEC is the single, substantially monopolistic technical bureau, the General Company of Engineering and Consulting who produce most, if not all, of the more important master plans in the country; the GCEC is also usually responsible for the preparation of detailed working drawings for infrastructure works (MAM, 2006, p.7).

the plan is modified taking into account the comments from the public; otherwise the executive office in Damascus Governorate proposes the plan for ratification by the MLAE. Figure (6.7) shows the process of producing a master plan for Damascus. After the master plan is produced and approved, UPD prepares the detailed plans following the same process of producing the master plan, though requiring ratification by the Governorate Council rather than by the MLAE (Fig. 6.8).

After the master plan has been ratified, it is ready to be implemented. According to Law on urban land division (Law 9/1974), the first step in the implementation process is to prepare the division and expropriation plans (if there is a need to), which are reviewed by the MLAE and the council of ministers. After that a Presidential Decree is issued to announce the area on which the expropriation and division will be implemented, and after that the supervision directorate initiates and completes the implementation process.

The Implementation phase includes a stage of land expropriation to implement projects for public benefits (roads, schools, shelters, squares....etc). The laws governing this process are Law 9/74 updated 60/1979, amended 26/2000, on expropriation of urban extension regions except in the city of Damascus, and Law 20/1983 on expropriation inside the urban plan for public needs.

The above was a review of the present legal systems of planning, development and control of development in Syria. According to McAuslan (2008) these legal systems are not performing satisfactorily. Law 5/82 on master plans requires plans that are too rigid and do not provide land in a timely manner for development. Laws 9/74; 60/79 and 26/00 are confusing and conflict with each other. They have been a major contributory factor in the growth of informal settlements. Too great a reliance is placed on expropriation as a tool of planning and Law 20/83, though providing proper procedural safeguards for those being expropriated, is cumbersome to operate and does not always provide fair compensation.

For the old city, according to Old Damascus Directorate *et al* (2006), different public bodies expropriated about 15% of the existing buildings since the 1960s. The largest proportion of these has been taken by the Ministry of Defence for public safety to provide routes for emergency vehicles and safe shelters (146 plots). Over 100 plots inside the old city were expropriated by the Ministry of Education to convert to schools.

Damascus Governorate owns approximately 52 plots and is responsible for restoring them – this includes valuable houses, *Kahns*, and schools. The Ministry of Tourism owns only 7 plots expropriated from its original owners for the purpose of investing in these as hotels. The Ministry of Culture owns 5 plots (DG, ODD & MLAE, 2006).

Law 5/1982 was amended by Law 41/2002 to consider the following points. The first point is that it gave Damascus Governorate the flexibility to sign a contract with any body for conducting a study. The second is that the RTC could include more members who are invited by the Governor, these members being representatives of Peasants Union, Union of Housing of Cooperation, Craftsmen Union, Syndicate of Engineers, The Ministry of Defence, The Ministry of Transportation, The Ministry of Irrigation and The Ministry of Tourism (they are invited if the objections from the public concern them). Additional amendments include defining specific times for some stages to be completed. Figure 6.9 shows the amendments to Law 5/1982 in red colour.

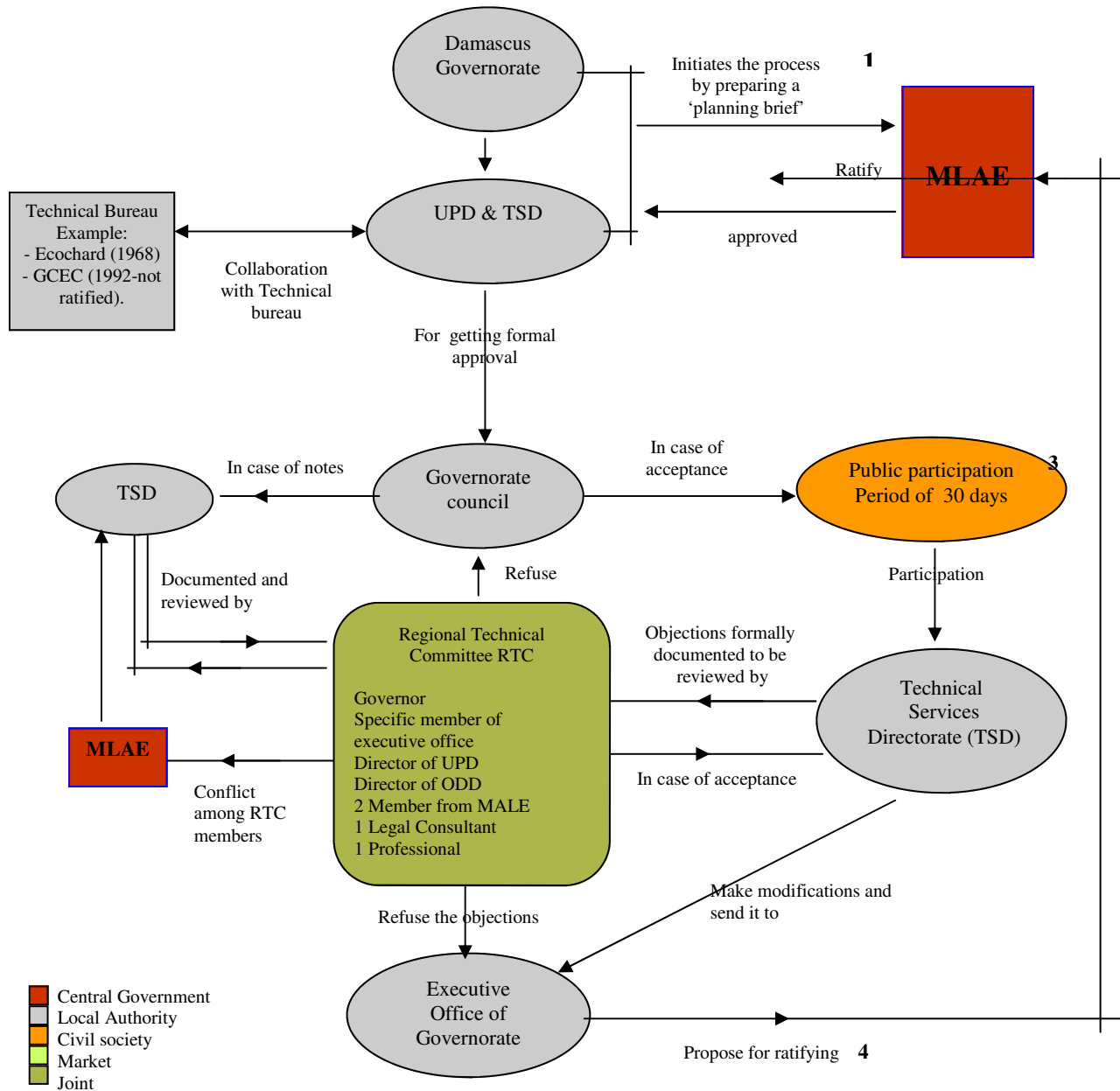


Figure 6.7 The process of producing a master plan according to Law 5/1982, applied to Damascus.

Issue noticed	Key comments
1. Centralisation	Weak position of municipality
2. Capacity	Municipality struggles with the production of master plan
3. Public participation	Limited – ‘in between’ the design and decision making stages
4. Decision making	Governorate Council + Executive office

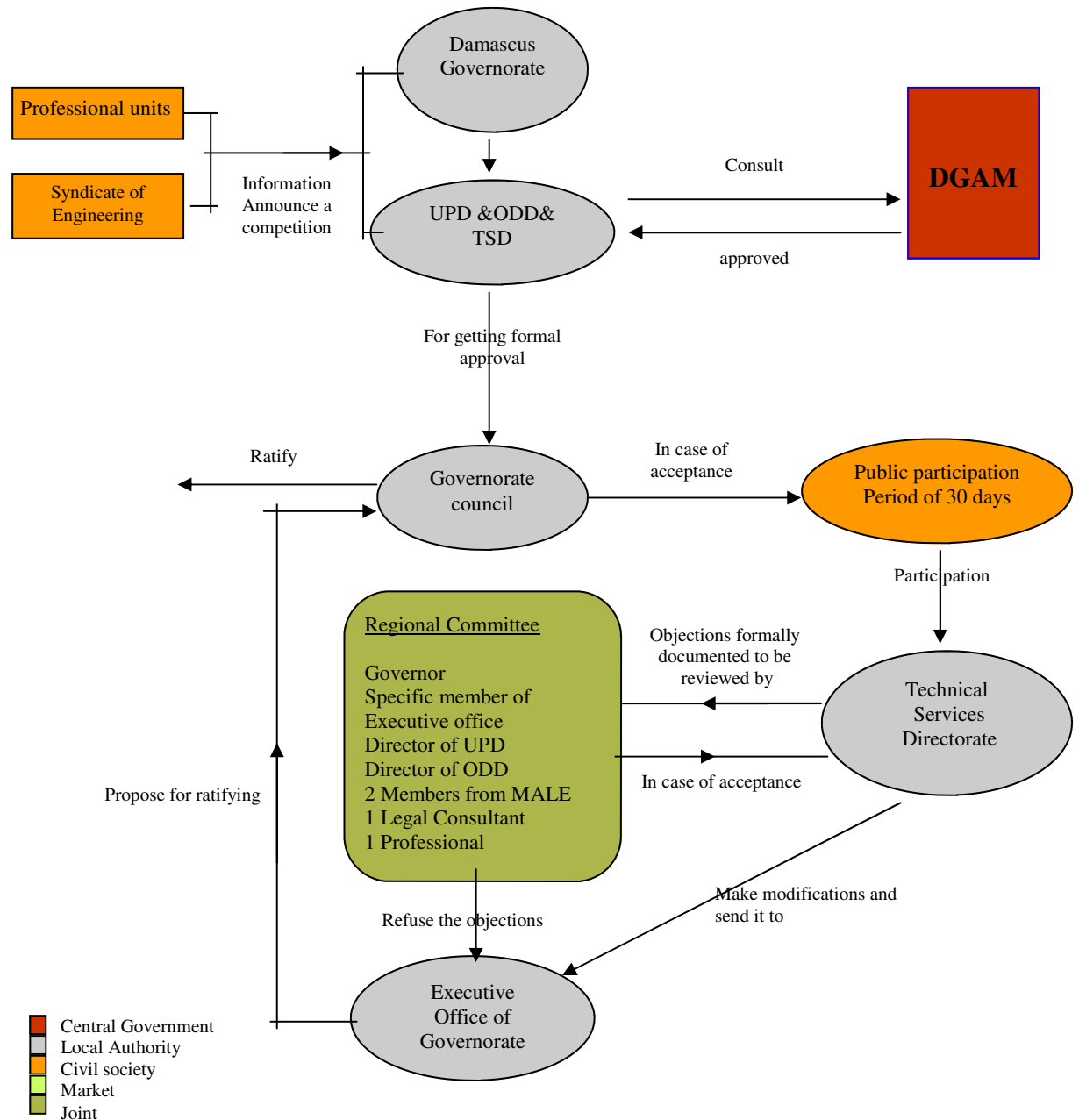


Figure 6.8 The process of producing the detailed plan according to Law 5/1982.

The above review describes the related laws for listing historic buildings and zones and preparation of master and detailed plans. An analysis of the process of producing a master plan revealed important issues: centralisation, poor capacity and limitation of public participation are among them. These are further discussed in section 6.5 of the analysis of the governance process.

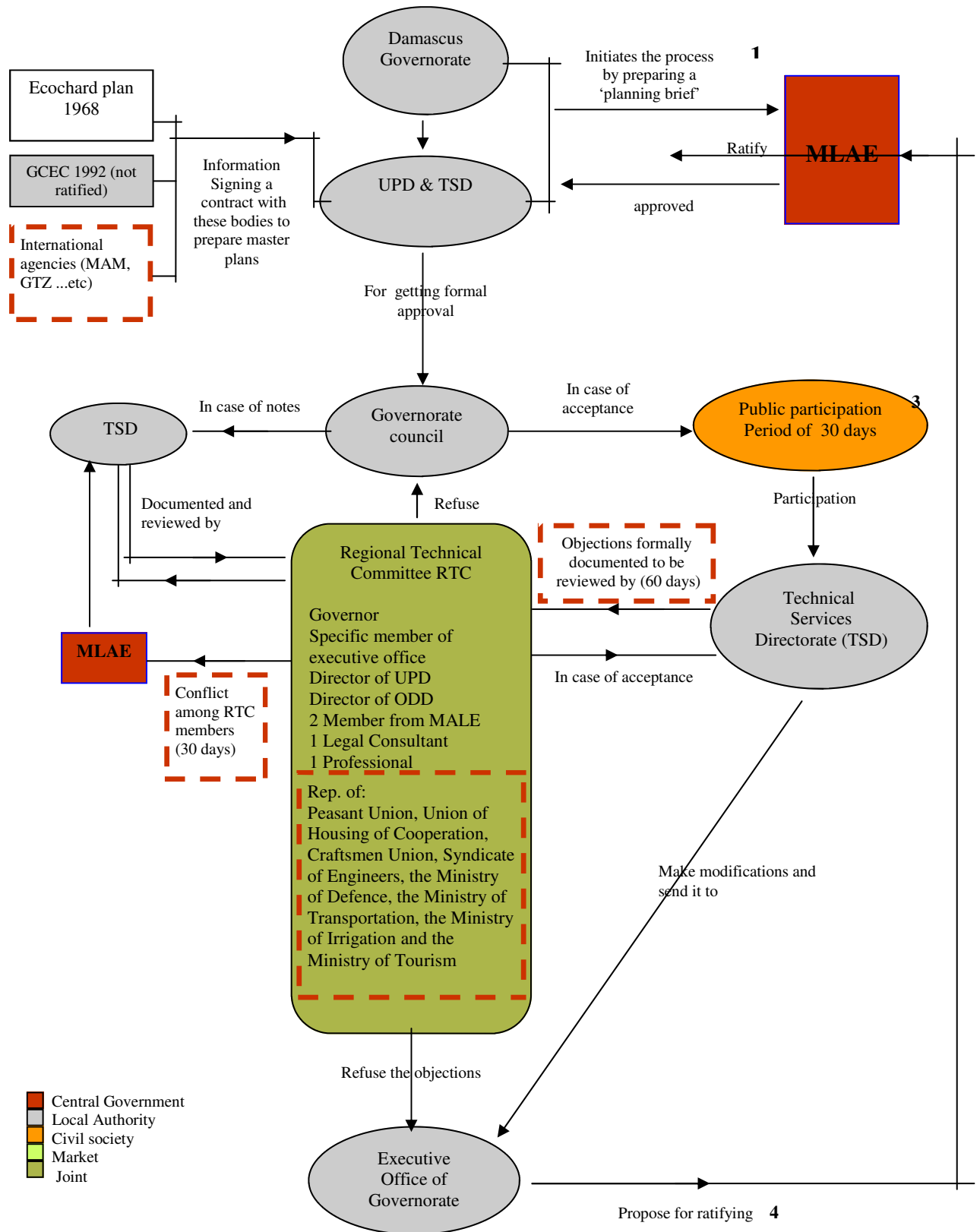


Figure 6.9 The process of producing the master & detailed plan according to Law 41/2002.

6.3.3 Financing

At national level, the Ministry of Culture is one of the least endowed institutions in the country. The DGAM commands less than 0.1% of the national budget. Direct funding for preserving and developing historical sites is rather limited. Major restoration projects are often carried out by discretionary funds earmarked by the central government. On the contrary, the MLAE is the best endowed central government public institution, commanding over 10% of the national budget and approximately the same percentage of civil servants (CORPUS Levant team, 2004).

The Ministry of *Awqaf* has an important role in historical urban zones and constitutes a substantial provider of funding, but this is directed to preserving and protecting religious monuments (CORPUS Levant team, 2004). So only buildings will be improved through this funding and not the whole public space. This is also evident in the fact that historical monuments are the key interest for DGAM insofar as its involvement with the historic fabric goes, and again the funding will be for the rehabilitation of, for example, the Citadel, gates and the wall and not the space as a whole.

The Ministry of Tourism carries out small projects aimed at preserving particular sites and promoting traditional crafts and trades. Their direct investment in this realm is limited though; the Ministry plays more the role of a facilitator than as a direct financial provider (CORPUS Levant team, 2004).

The main source of finance for Damascus Governorate comes from the central government, which covers 90% through assigned revenues (Doherty, 2005). Other minor sources are land tax, permission for building and rebuilding, payments for cleaning and fines. However, there is no payment for getting a license for restoring the houses inside the old city. Thus there is no incentive to issue such licenses, which makes the process for getting the license very low.

The law in relation to local duties / taxes (Law 1 /1994) is very centralistic and does not allow for any areas of discretion. It needs an essential change in order to review the relationship between central government and local government and to provide local authority with an independent source of revenue to meet the legitimate demands of their

citizens (Doherty, 2005). To address this, Law 18/2007 was approved to set in place the necessary revenues for local authorities and provide them with the ability to set charges based on the economic cost of providing the services and the cost of billing and collection (*al-baladiate wa al beaah* local Journal, 2007).

It is noted that centralisation affects the financial resources available to local authorities:

“The cities have no single large independent source of local income. All their income is derived either from government grant that is centrally controlled or from local duties that are also limited in their application. The extensive use of grants reduces the scope for local authorities to set their own priorities for spending plans and service levels in response to local need without central government approval” (Doherty, 2005, p.5).

6.4 Rationalities within the process: perceptions and attitudes

Following the above presentation of the actors and the rules, the following paragraphs discuss the actors' perception of the historic fabric and public spaces. This will be to clarify the conceptual understanding of these terms by the actors involved and how this affects the framework of governance.

Within the territorial context, a narrative of Damascus's identity has been constructed based on three main elements: *Kassioun* Mountain; *Barada* River; and *AlGhouta* (the agricultural plain). In songs, poetry and documentary programmes Damascus has always been attached to these three elements. This identity holds a great importance and influence on the evolution of Damascus and the directions in which it has expanded (see chapter 5). This sense of Damascus's identity has been taken forward with more architectural elements within the urban context.

When invited to define their perception of the public spaces in historic Damascus, there is a general consensus among actors that the historic image of old Damascus is very important, with emphasis on architectural elements listed by interviewees including the wall, the gates, the great Mosque and the citadel. As officials from GDAM noted, “What is important for us within these spaces is the *Bab Tuma* gate, the Citadel”. In other words,

the historic image of Damascus dominates most actors' perceptions, and this image is based on buildings which are important and give symbolic value to the space.

On the other hand, evoking of the historic image in some of the interviewees' minds who lived in *Bab Tuma* and the area forming the Citadel space (before demolishing) revealed important social as well as symbolic values. One interviewee (no. 34) remembered how he spent a great social time in *al Khuja suq* when he went to visit his father who used to work in the citadel. Another interviewee (no. 11) remembered how there were shops very close to *Bab Tuma* space and how there was much social activity happening there: "many local shopkeepers were shouting and socialising". These answers reflect Bianca's (1984, p. 21) observation that the historic centre "acts as a collective memory for the society; it is an expression of shared attitudes and common patterns of life, and as such it is a source of identity and inspiration".

The researcher's investigation of the perception among actors raised awareness of the importance of the historic image of the city in the actors' perception and how this influences both the process of governance of the historic fabric and the product – i.e, the spaces that were analysed in the previous chapter. This is evident in the following paragraphs, which highlight the Wall of old Damascus as a physical barrier as well as a rule of governance.

The historic fabric consists of two parts: the old city within the wall (a world heritage site) and the suburbs spreading around it. These two parts, from the researcher's point of view, are equally important and should be defined as one entity, as a historic core within the whole Damascus. In an article by *al faham* (2007) in the local press, he discussed that the historic parts outside the old city such as *Saroudja*, *Kanawat* and *Salihyya* are equally important, emphasising that the wall is an important element, but should not be a barrier which separates the old city from its natural expansion. This core is the soul of the city which represents its identity, therefore it needs to be looked after and be dealt with applying great sensitivity. As Bianca (1984, p. 21) noted, "a historic centre contains the essence, or the 'spirit' of a culture".

But what this investigation showed is that the wall played a great role as a physical barrier between the old city and its expanded fabric outside the wall. This physical separation influenced the division of the administration system for the area into two

separate administrative bodies: the Old Damascus Directorate (ODD), which is in charge of the old city inside the wall, and the Urban Planning Directorate (UPD), which is responsible for outside the city wall. In other words, the wall has become a barrier not only as a physical element but also as a rule which influences actors' framework of governance as an administrative separation.

The investigation of the actors' perception of public spaces, particularly the selected spaces presented in chapter 5, also revealed the monumentality dimension of space identity. The importance attached to the gates, the citadel and the wall and their physical situation were again noted. The spaces tended to be evaluated according to the physical state of repair of the monuments located within them.

These rationalities discussed above can be seen in the Morozove master plan of 1957 and the Ecochard and Banshoya plan of 1968 (see chapter 5). The latter plan is pinned up on the wall in most officials' offices where interviews were carried out by the researcher. It clearly still has an impact on the rationality of dealing with the city and its historic core. As one official (no. 8) mentioned, "you can't ignore the Ecochard plan. We have relied on it to develop and plan Damascus and we still do".

Another perception of the extra muros areas brought to attention through the interviews is that of the buffer zone. Some interviewees noted that Old Damascus should have a defined buffer zone which could be a green zone or a zone which provides services such as parking areas, small parks and open spaces. If this is a potential solution to current dereliction of open spaces in this area, how applicable is it on the ground? Some interviewees, particularly professionals, highlighted the importance of the green open space associated with the *Barada* River, which is located in the Northern extra muros areas. This is supported by literature, when Moaz (1998) emphasised that the green open spaces and abundant water, these two natural elements, have played an important role in facilitating the expansion of the old city towards the North and West. This concept could play the role of a buffer zone. In this regard, the French Institute for Arabic studies in Damascus conducted a study in 1999 for the northern extra muros areas, in which they proposed solutions to upgrade the area with emphasis on strengthening the concept of the buffer zone (Appendix 6.4). However, this solution only partly answers the question because it would be possible just for the northern area, but the question still remains present for the other sides of Old Damascus.



Figure 6.10 Ecochard and Banshoya master plan 1968 as presented in the governorate offices.
Source: Damascus Governorate.

Bianca (2000) noted that transition areas have to be designed in a way that provides functional integration, while ensuring physical differentiation. These transition areas could act as a buffer zone. Moreover, Bianca (2000, p.182) described an opposite concept to what the Ecochard plan imposed – a concept that gradually reduces the vehicular access inside the historic fabric – when he explained that the “traditional physical characteristics of the historic city, such as the walls, the gates and the narrow lanes are the best means of physical protection against the impact of vehicular traffic and should therefore be strengthened, while at the same time introducing attractive new functions and easing access through attractive public transportation”. In this regard, Bianca argued that the governmental enhancement of public open space has to be redirected towards the old city in order to achieve a balance between the old city and new quarters. The difference in concept between Bianca and Ecochard can be seen in what happened in *King Fisal Street* – KFS (see appendix 6.5 for the story of KFS).

In the meantime, the local authority has attempted to promote the tourist industry and encourage investment and upgrading of the historic fabric towards accommodating these attempts. This is happening within a wider context of the transition in the

country's economy; from command one to social market economy. This could be noted from an interview with an old cities expert from the Municipal Administration Modernization program (MAM), who highlighted the rationality towards heritage as a means to attract business. This perception was confirmed through an interviewee (no. 38) who expressed that "Syria is an open museum and we try to make ruins serve as a replacement for oil revenue".

In 2006, a detailed survey was done by ODD to assess the situation of the historic fabric in Damascus and a committee was composed upon a request from the governor by law no. 5090. This committee consists of: the governor; executive member for the culture, tourism and heritage sector; the director of ODD; the director of urban planning; 3 consultants; representative of public associations; manager of documentation department; representative of Damascus tourism; representative of GDAM and representative of Religious Endowments Department. The result from this study was a land use plan which recommended the land uses and attempted to classify the axes according to their uses, but the land use plan was just for the old city inside the wall.

Currently⁴¹, another detailed land use plan is in process of preparation by ODD in cooperation with the MAM programme. The detailed plan includes the old city and a buffer zone. Two committees have been created to define the buffer zone for the old city: one upon request from the main director of GDAM in July 2008, and the second upon request from the governor in September 2008, yet the definition of the buffer zone is not clear or defined. However, as one interviewee (no. 21) explained, the main understanding of it is to be a linear zone surrounding the old city.

The above discussion highlights the possible conceptual understandings of the historic fabric and its elements. It also shows the differences in approaches between different actors' rationalities, and the low profile of public space within these.

⁴¹ The researcher gathered the information about the current situation in 2009, at the time of writing the first full draft, by telephone interviews with two officials during March 2009.

6.5 Analysis of the governance process over public space in Damascus

The previous three sections presented the governance process through the main actors, rules and rationale which controls it. The following three subsections provide an analytical summary of the details presented above, through the same framework: actors, rules and the rationale they use. First, however, a general picture of the situation of urban planning in Syria is provided. Perthes (2004) noted that over-centralisation, or what Syrians refer to as *al-birukratiyya* (cumbersome), is a severe problem and a key factor of inefficiency and administrative routine. MAM's report (2006) about the urban planning situation in Syria noted the complexity of governmental systems at work in the planning and development process, with complicated legislation in term of urban development (see Appendix 6.6 for more information on the MAM programme).

6.5.1 Actors

Analysis of the actors defined in section 6.2 showed that the main and dominant actors in the process are the national and local authorities, who mostly initiate the process and lead the design and implementation phases. Within the local government system in Damascus, Damascus Governorate through its council and executive office makes decisions, and its directorates implement these. It is also noted that the elected Governorate Council is led by an appointed person who holds the power of decision making within the Council as well as the executive office. This shows the democratic deficit within the system as well as centralisation.

Local residents and neighbourhoods are institutionalised through committees, *Mokhtars* and residents' associations. Yet, limited space is provided for them to participate in the governance process. Interviews showed that the participation and involvement of the local communities is limited in the governance of public space. Public participation in the process is 'a formality' through the 30 days period for the public to make objections on the project. This is one step in the procedures of Law 5/1982, which takes place only between the design stage and decision making stage. This was noted in MAM (2006, p.2): "in spite of being a growing voice the public is only involved at the end of the plan making process, leading to disputes that take a long time to resolve, and cost money to all concerned". Moreover, MAM's report (2008) stated that in practice the influence of Neighbourhood Committees on the City investment planning and other activities seem to be limited.

One important point which appeared to be missing during the interviews in Damascus was the understanding of what urban governance really stands for, among both the local authority officials and local community. Interviewees no. 7 and 35 noted that “The city is for all people, not just for Damascus governorate”. They explained that the families, who live in the northern extra morus area where the *Malik Fisal* Street will be executed, have waited for 40 years for local authority (Damascus Governorate) to improve the area. This delay in action, not only led to the continuous deterioration in the area, but also to suspicion in the relationship between society and the local authority officials. In addition, no one interviewee mentioned the need to promote education and public awareness by giving expertise and advice, organising seminars and other events and activities.

On the other hand, interviewees from academic bodies explained that there has been encouragement to involve the civil society sectors in the process, through appointing academics to be in governmental positions. This provides a good resource of know-how to deal with the historic environment. However, the need to further strengthen the academic bodies’ involvement is identified, in particular during the decision making stage as decisions, according to some academic interviewees, are still made by placing economic interests first, thus emphasising exchange values over heritage and traditional values, and this of course mobilises the market’s role.

The importance of the role of local authority and community in the development process has been noted in a report summarising the results of a focus group on Syria cultural heritage, which was organised by the Regional Management Support Unit (RMSU)⁴² of the Euromed Heritage Programme. It noted that:

“The importance of informing and engaging local communities in the development of a site and in sharing economic and financial benefits has been highlighted at different stages. As a matter of fact, local communities do not welcome cultural heritage events nor are aware of the possible benefits deriving from investments taking place in areas where they are to be found. Therefore they need to be consulted in advance and to be adequately involved in the site planning

⁴² RMSU organized a focus group which includes 31 participants belonging to GOs, NGOs, universities and civil society organizations, who met and discussed country needs in the cultural heritage sector in three levels: human resources, legislative and institutional framework.

and management process. Awareness should be increased concerning needs, projects and sustainability” (RMSU, 2006, p. 4).

In this context, the analysis of the actors showed that the Service Department links the neighbourhoods with the local authority. Its role is to meet neighbourhood’s committee and *Mokhtar* in order to report as well as respond to their needs and problems. But how does this affect public realm and public space? This will be further discussed in section 6.6.

In conclusion, local authority has a leading role in the governance process of public spaces with a limited role for civil society in the process. The role of the market is controlled and mobilised through the local authority.

6.5.2 Rules of the governance process

In the following paragraphs, the rules of the governance process are considered and analysed. It is noted that the urban planning approach is a top-down approach with a great emphasis on defining rules and regulations rather than objectives and strategies. Interference results from geographic locations of the administrative bodies, laws are rigid and are not performing satisfactorily, and finances are a limitation. All these factors constitute an institutional setting which influences the regeneration process and prevents it from going smoothly.

The definition of geographic areas of jurisdiction creates interference and also isolation between the different bodies responsible for these. It is problematic in particular for the spaces on the edge of the city wall like the *Bab Tuma* space, the Citadel space and the *Bab Sharki* space. In addition, the existence of several administrative bodies at the level of the city leads not only to fragmentation in design proposals, but also to complexity in the process, which requires a sufficient and efficient coordination between the different bodies in order to achieve the desired product. In an interview with the project manager in German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), he explained this problem when he talked about the Aleppo experience, and noted that:

“the directorate of the Old City has several departments, each one has specific tasks – for infrastructure; traffic; housing; building permits; information; management – and worked together with Antiquities. They sit in the same office,

the Antiquities have a delegation to the same office, so when we talk about monuments of course they are in, all of them are under one roof” (Interview no.37).

By this, he suggested a solution when he emphasised that:

“cities are systems with different aspects and these aspects must be mirrored in the organisations which deal with them, and that is what has been achieved in Aleppo or somehow .., it can be improved, but this is the approach that we need, a multidisciplinary organised administration to mirror the complexity of urban development and to ease cooperation” (Interview no. 37).

The confusion around geographic location appeared in interviewees’ answers when they were asked about some spaces such as the *Bab Tuma* space. Before they answered the researcher’s question related to this space, they asked whether the question was about the space inside the wall or outside it. This was also reflected in actors’ perceptions as some of them considered that the wall is a separation element between the old and new city while others consider that Damascus has a historic core within which the wall constitutes an important heritage and historical value.

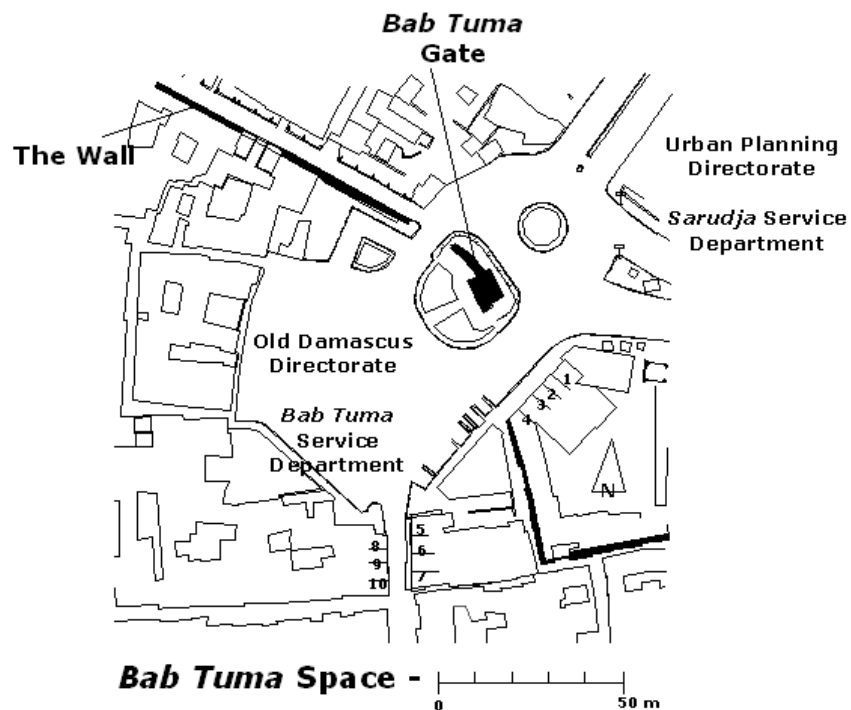


Figure 6.11 *Bab Tuma* space with related responsible bodies.
Source: the researcher.

According to legislation, service departments' responsibilities involve monitoring the area and its public spaces through regular site visits to report on the existing situation and then to propose improvement where possible. Also, a plan which reflects the current problems with suggestions of how to improve the area should be prepared at the end of each year and proposed to the governor for approving. But interviews showed that the plan is prepared in a short time and near the end of the year without prior sufficient monitoring and real diagnosis of the area's problems.

Moreover, corruption among officials leads to many breaches of planning regulations. According to the Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR)⁴³, the latest anti-corruption campaign in late 2003 removed dozens of public employees from the civil service (see appendix 6.7), and these actions are still going on according to the local press.

With regard to legislation, it is noted the review of the urban planning law 5/1982, updated in law 41/2002, considered giving wider room for civil society sectors to participate through representatives in the RTC. However, this opportunity is limited because it is subject to the governor inviting these sectors to participate. No mention of neighbourhood associations is made in Law 41/2002, even though Law 55/2002 was issued in the same year. Moreover, the amendments made to Law 5/1982 decentralised commissioning powers by giving Damascus Governorate the permission to sign a contract with any institution, either local or foreign, to conduct a study.

Interviewees explained that the old city has a clear legislation and it sets in place the basis on which to deal with the area, but the case of the historic parts outside the old city is not the same. These historic parts contain important buildings which have been codified by GDAM without a clear definition of the historic neighbourhoods. This absence of a clear legal basis to deal with the areas outside the city wall has delayed a serious intervention for upgrading the areas. This was noted by the RMSU report (2006, p.5), which identified "the need for a legally binding geographical identification of heritage sites in the country".

⁴³ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) launched the Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR) in early 2000. POGAR was developed at the request of Arab governments, and therefore specifically addresses national needs and concerns.

Interviewees considered that the existing antiquities law is generic and lacks the regulations for implementation and Law No. 5 governing the planning process does not go into details about preserving areas of special character. In the researcher's view the result is that the historic part outside the city wall gets 'lost between the two'. Moreover, officials from GDAM and ODD who were interviewed referred to the conflict they perceive between the antiquities law and planning law, in relation to the maintenance and use of traditional materials.

This conflict has been noted in the RMSU report (2006, p.4):

“The approach of the existing Syrian law for the protection of cultural heritage is more inspired by a constraining approach rather than by that of giving directives with a development oriented philosophy. The existing legislation should rather identify a balance between preservation and local development. In many cases, it seems that Development and Cultural Heritage policies are confrontational and can not co-exist”.

In relation to finance, Syria's taxation regime needs top-down renewal – total modernisation. MAM plans to assist by establishing a major source of local tax through transferring the property tax from central to local government, and through a fundamental review of all local duties and fees. Substantial improvement in the local tax system, including an enhanced ability to control the level, effectiveness and efficiency of taxation, is forecast (MAM brochure, 2007).

To conclude, the current legislation allows for working in a decentralised manner, but does not allow for decentralisation of budgets. Centralisation in decision making and financial matters (Damascus governorate gets most of the funding from the national government with very few and limited revenues for other funding); conflicts caused by planning laws; division between administrative units and their geographic location of responsibilities – all of these make the rules difficult and complex.

6.5.3 Rationalities within the process: perceptions and attitudes

From discussing actors' perceptions of the historic fabric, four main approaches are noted: the historic image based on buildings, the wall as a physical barrier and rule,

monumentality and the buffer zone. Each one has its role and meaning, but provides part of the answer to what design criteria should be applied to the open spaces to recover and how intervention in singular spaces that had been deformed should take place. It is also noted through the analysis of the interviews that actors' perceptions tend to fall within either architectural thinking or planning thinking – the urban design dimension is missing in actors' rationality.

Considering the meaning and value of the space, raising the social values of the *Bab Tuma* space and citadel is important, but is rebuilding *Bab Tuma* space and constructing the original shape the answer? Kocabaş (2004) noted that what is more important when developing a strategy to safeguard the historic fabric considering its values, is to reconceptualise traditional urban conservation planning as a component of sustainable urban regeneration.

The researcher agrees that the historical monuments are important but what is more important is to engage these monuments within the life of the spaces, as Cohen (2001) defined successful urban conservation that is not only preserving a few buildings, but also and more importantly it is a comprehensive approach to conservation. Presenting the spaces in chapter 5 revealed how *Bab Tuma* gate and the citadel stand isolated from their surroundings as they are missing their history, they are secluded and cut off from the life.

An important element that seems to be missing in actors' perceptions as revealed through the interviews is the civic meaning of public realm. A civic public space is a place rich in meanings concerning social community, an essential dimension for rebuilding the identity of the city, which needs an effective public participation in the governance process. The inhabitants, families, new arrivals, immigrants, owners of restaurants, community actors and shop owners, all need to be aware of their surroundings and given support in their involvement to convey the city's multifaceted identity.

Another important point noted in actors' rationalities is the lack of awareness of the spatial qualities of public space. When asked about their perception of public spaces, the answers focused either on monuments, which is related to 'architecture' or on the buffer zone, which came under the 'planning'. All interviewees' answers limited the problem

of the spaces to car movement problem without mentioning other spatial qualities of the spaces. Indeed very few local academics and professionals, as well as interviewees from international agencies, described the forms enclosing the spaces and referred to the use of public space and activities happening there. In addition, the project manager in German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) (see appendix 6.8) emphasised the need to improve the living conditions of people living in the historic fabric before restoring buildings.

Analysis also showed differences in actors' attitudes towards the historic fabric in general. In some projects, Damascus Governorate and GDAM differ in their evaluation of the historic value of the buildings or site and this leads to creating obstacles, which has hampered the process. An example of this is the rehabilitation of *al Hamidiyyah suq*, where ODD initiated the replacement of the *suq* roof because it was deteriorated, and GDAM refused that considering that the holes in the roof related to the French period. Also in the case of *Malik Fisal* Street, while some houses are considered of great value to GDAM, they are not the same for Damascus Governorate.

6.6 Reflections on the *Bab Tuma* space and the Citadel space in relation to their governance

The above review has provided an understanding of the governance process in central Damascus in general, concerning actors, rules and rationalities. In this section, the researcher identifies seven ways in which improvements are introduced to public spaces in the historic fabric. This is addressed by describing how these processes would take place in the two spaces analysed in chapter 5, examining potential outcomes and barriers and limitations which might be encountered. The descriptions and analyses of the processes that could take place in relation to these spaces are based on evidence from processes which have been found out about other spaces, also in the historic fabric, through the interviews.

6.6.1 Method of analysis

The main method of analysis is the use of diagrams or conceptual maps, which was used by Smith (1999) in his doctoral thesis in which he studied housing and community development from households' perspective in Costa Rica. Smith (1999, p. 201)

produced “diagrams which show households’ perception of specific resource flows, of the nature of links and of the actors involved”. Maxwell (2005) defined concept maps and the main uses for them (see chapter 3 on methodology).

The researcher uses bubble diagrams for analysis which show the actors involved in the process and the relations between them. Adding a map of the space shows the effect of the process on the product and what design aspects could be affected. The direction of the arrows indicates how information flows from one actor to another. For those actors who are part of local government, the thickness of the line forming the bubble reflects their position of the actor within (or in relation to) the Damascus Governorate structure. This helps visually display how decision-making processes can go up and down the hierarchy of local government.

6.6.2 Existing practices used in different locations towards improvement

A. Process 1 initiated by local residents or businesses

A.1. Analysis of the process

This process starts with action taken by the residents and/or the shopkeepers who inhabit the space. They agree to sign a letter of complaint to send it to the service department responsible for the space. This step starts by a person who cares about the problem or who is the person most affected by it. The relevant service department appoints an engineer to inspect the problem and prepare a formal document to make a decision about it. If the problem is outwith the service department’s responsibilities, the service department will forward it to the governor who recommends to the relevant directorate to deal with the problem.

A.2. Outcomes

This process has two actual outcomes. The first is when the related service department can decide about the problem or complaint (such as when residents are annoyed by vendors, or one neighbour is annoyed with his neighbour’s breach of building codes, such as building a room on the roof or in the garden or enclosing a balcony). The decision of the related services department affects the simple aspects of space management and services (relocation of vendors) and to some degree the design of the facades either (removing breaches of building codes or allowing these to happen). But

if the complaint or proposal is outside the service department's responsibilities, it should forward it to a higher local authority and in this case the design of the space could be affected to some extent. Such cases occur when e.g. building owners decide to change the colour or materials of their building, or if the neighbours complain about a nearby restaurant which annoys them with its smell and noise. In this case the design of the facades surrounding the space as well as the uses will be affected. Figure 6.12 shows the process 1 highlighting the aspects related to product that could be affected.

A.3.Limitations and barriers

This process rises from the grassroots, but it is not institutionalised. A complaint about a problem could be made individually or by a group of people, through the service department to which the neighbourhood is related. However, there are limitations to the role of the service department managing its area. In turn this leads to lengthy procedures to resolve the problem. Fig 6.12 shows the complexity of the process and how it is initiated from the community to a local service, to the governor and then comes down to the relevant directorates.

Process 1

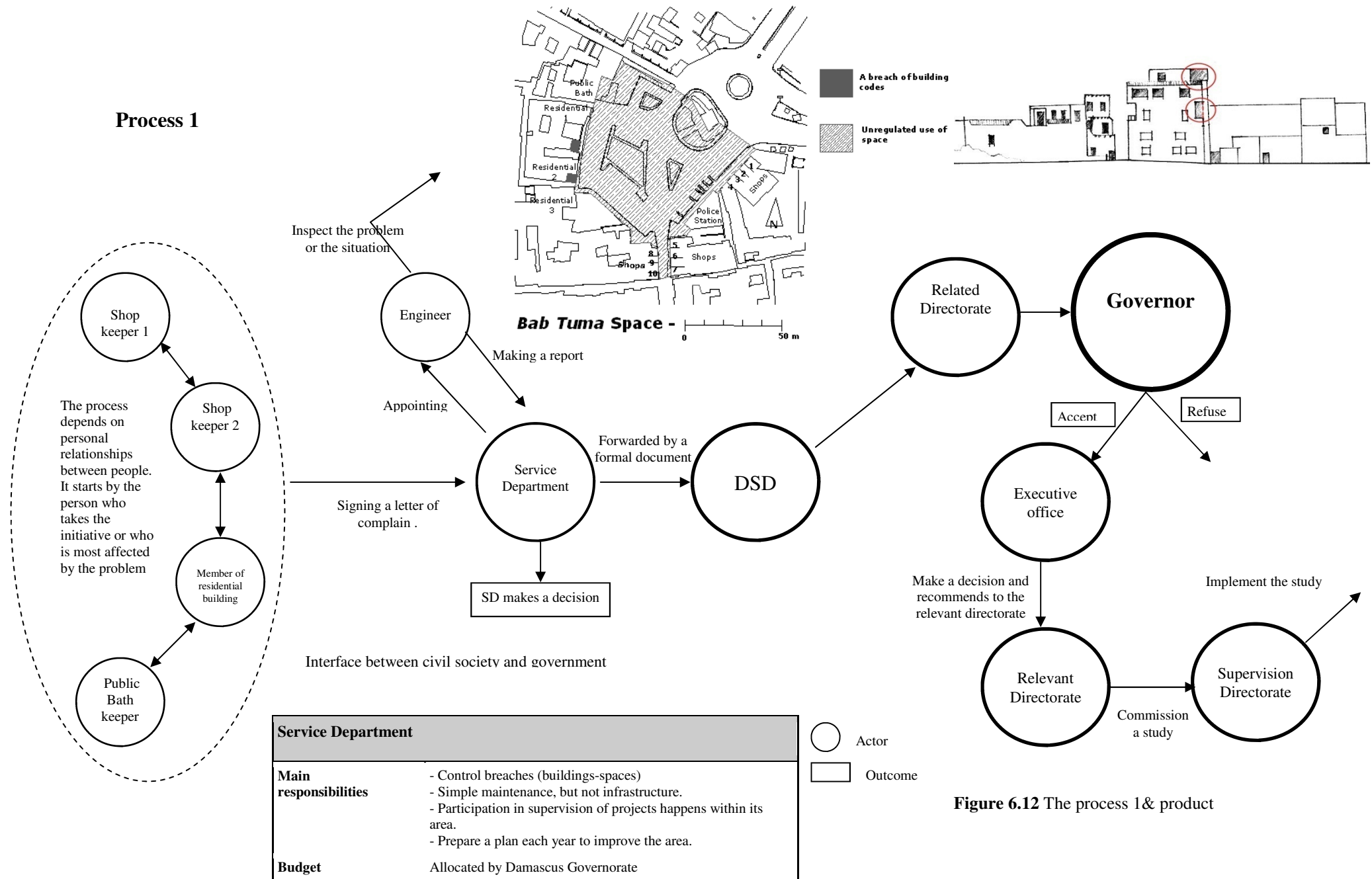


Figure 6.12 The process 1& product

B. Process 2 initiated by residents for maintenance and rehabilitation purposes

B.1. Analysis of the process

This process is initiated by a property owner (either house or other facilities) or by a tenant. The aim of this process is to get a licence for restoration, alteration and rebuilding by which permission is given to the residents to restore their houses. The resident needs to prepare a document which includes an application to restore the property, the owner's approval (if the applicant is a tenant) and a copy of cadastral records. After that three engineers from the technical office inspect the house and the works intended to be done, and prepare a document summarising the necessary works. The document is reviewed by the technical committee and then by the Local Protection Committee to reach a decision. After a decision is made, the resident implements the work under the supervision of one engineer from the technical office. For restoration which includes replacement of walls and roofs, the licence should be signed by the director of the inspection committee (which inspects the situation and the works needed), the director of permissions and the director of the executive office. Figure 6.13 shows the three committees which relate to Damascus Governorate: Local Protection Committee (LPC), Technical Committee for inside the old city and Technical Committee for outside the old city.

B.2. Outcomes

This process affects the public space when restoration is made to facades and/or when residential use is changed to commercial – chapter 5 shows how this change affects the nature of public space from semi private and private to public use. Figure 6.14 shows the process 2 highlighting the aspects related to product that could be affected.

B.3. Limitations and barriers

This process is long and needs many requirements to be completed. There are no subsidies for restoration efforts. However, at the time of writing this thesis the local government with support from an international donor (the German agency for technical cooperation – GTZ) was about to initiate a programme to assist inhabitants through offering small loans and free technical consulting on housing maintenance and renovation.

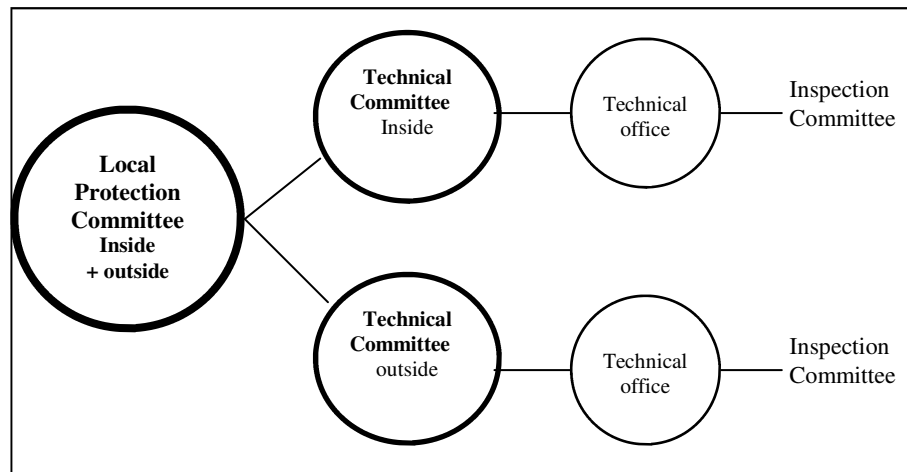
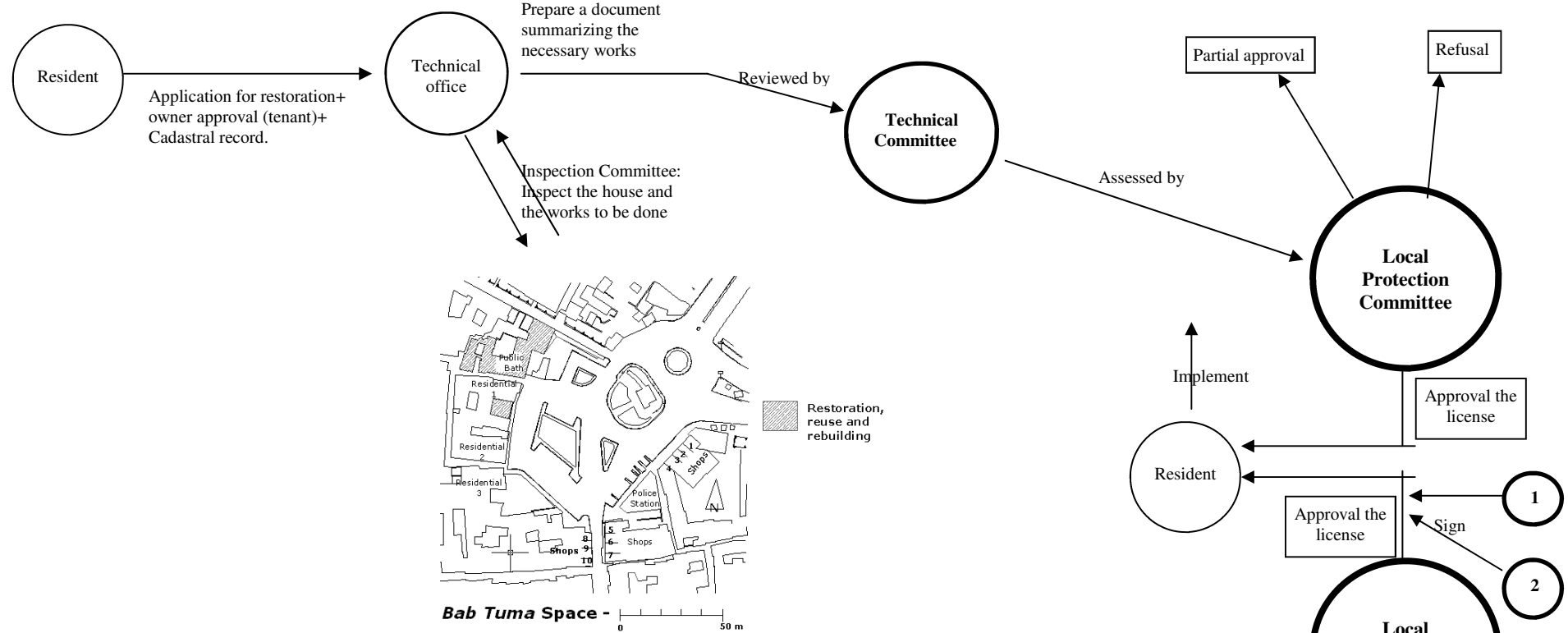


Figure 6.13 The three committees which relates to Damascus Governorate.

Process 2

1. Getting license for simple restoration.



2. Getting license for restoration, rebuilding and reuse.

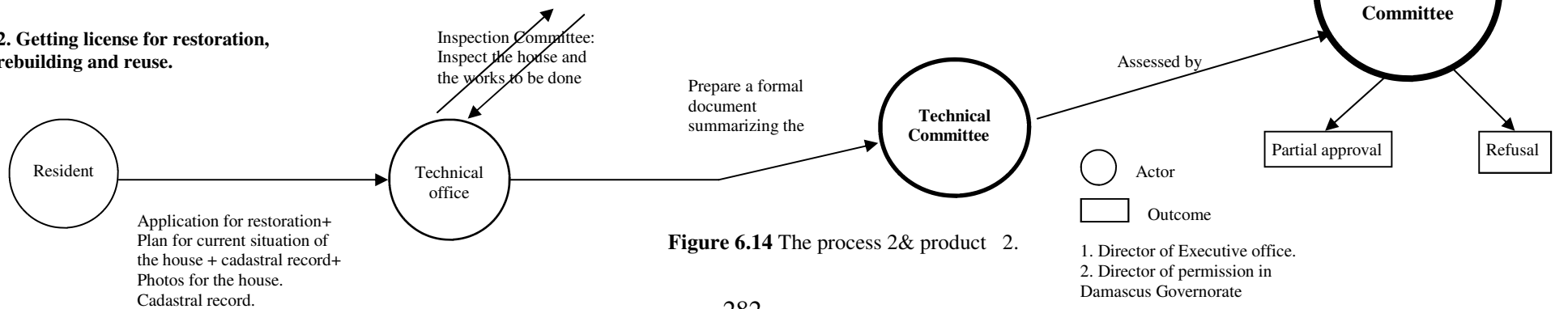


Figure 6.14 The process 2& product 2.

○ Actor
□ Outcome

1. Director of Executive office.
2. Director of permission in
Damascus Governorate

C. Process 3 initiated by the local authority (Service Department) (1)

C.1. Analysis of the process

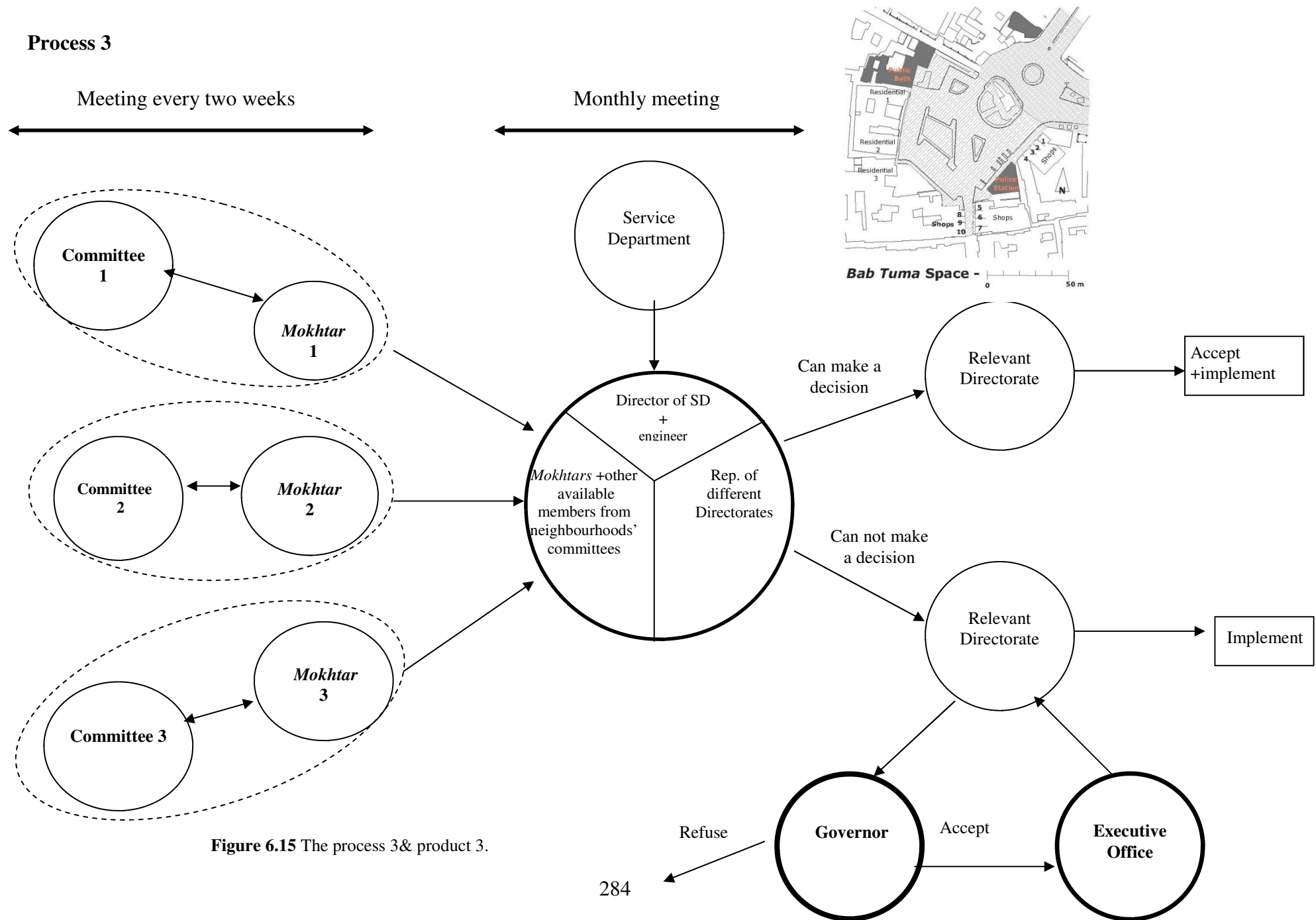
This process is initiated by the Service Department (SD). Monthly, each SD holds a meeting with *Mokhtars* and other available members from the neighbourhood committees it is responsible for. The director of SD and an engineer are responsible for the meeting, which is also attended by a member of the Executive Office and other representatives from different Technical Directorates, electricity and water companies. In this meeting, neighbourhood represented by their *Mokhtars* discuss different issues and needs such as social, educational, economic, etc. Where the relevant directorate can deal with the problem, a decision is made to be implemented under the supervision of the service department. Otherwise, the relevant directorate forwards the problem to the governor to be discussed and make a decision.

C.2. Outcomes

The outcomes from these meetings are mainly to deal with the management and maintenance of public space and some issues related to public realm concerning safety and surveillance. Fieldwork showed that one neighbourhood committee was concerned with the increase in thieving happening within one famous shopping street in their neighbourhood. They related that to the increase in the number of strangers shopping on that street, and they suggested police units to control and monitor the street and increase safety. Figure 6.15 shows the process 3, highlighting the aspects related to product that could be affected.

C.3. Limitations and barriers

Two issues were highlighted by interviewees. The limitation of the role of the service department in decision making to respond to the local needs directly and effectively, and the fact that issues related to the design of public space and projects initiated by Damascus Governorate are not discussed in these meetings. This takes us back to comparing how spaces used to be managed and monitored by the residents themselves, whereas now they are constructed and managed in a more formalised way.



D. Process 4 initiated by the local authority (Service Department) (2)

D.1. Analysis of the process

This process is initiated by the Service Department (SD). Annually, each SD is responsible for preparing a plan in which it suggests improvements for the area it covers. Examples of such improvements include replacement of pavements or asphalt, replacement pipes for sewage, for drinking water, electricity and phone, street lighting, removing breaches on facades, preventing vendors from occupying public space or relocating them. The DSD gathers the plans into one overall plan and prepares a formal document to propose it to the Governor, who will either accept the plan or refuse it. In case of acceptance, the executive office approves it and sends it to the Technical Services Directorate TSD to prepare a formal document for execution and send it to the Supervision Directorate, which will put the contract out to tender for private sector to execute under the supervision of the Supervision Directorate.

D.2. Outcomes

The outcomes from this plan will just affect the pedestrian area. It won't introduce changes to uses, design of the buildings or car movement. Figure 6.16 shows the process 4, highlighting the aspects related to product that could be affected.

D.3. Limitations and barriers

Three issues which limit the performance of service departments were highlighted by interviewees. The first one is that the service department has no independent budget as its budget is allocated by Damascus Governorate. By this system, the service department has no role in decision making and should always refer to the higher local authority to get approval for very local matters to be addressed. This adds more complexity to the process and makes it long.

The second issue is that the officials who work in these departments are not aware of the responsibilities they have. Moreover, they are changed frequently because as soon as they get a job with higher salary, they either leave the job in the service department or continue the job without really fulfilling their responsibilities. They will keep the job just as a second source of income. And so the plan will be done by officials who often are not aware enough of their responsibilities and who prepare the plan near the deadline, without regular visits to the sites.

Another issue that was highlighted is corruption among officials. This problem allows many breaches of building codes to take place, both in occupying the public space by vendors and in buildings. However, this problem is decreasing because the government has launched several anti-corruption campaigns in the last five years.

Process 4

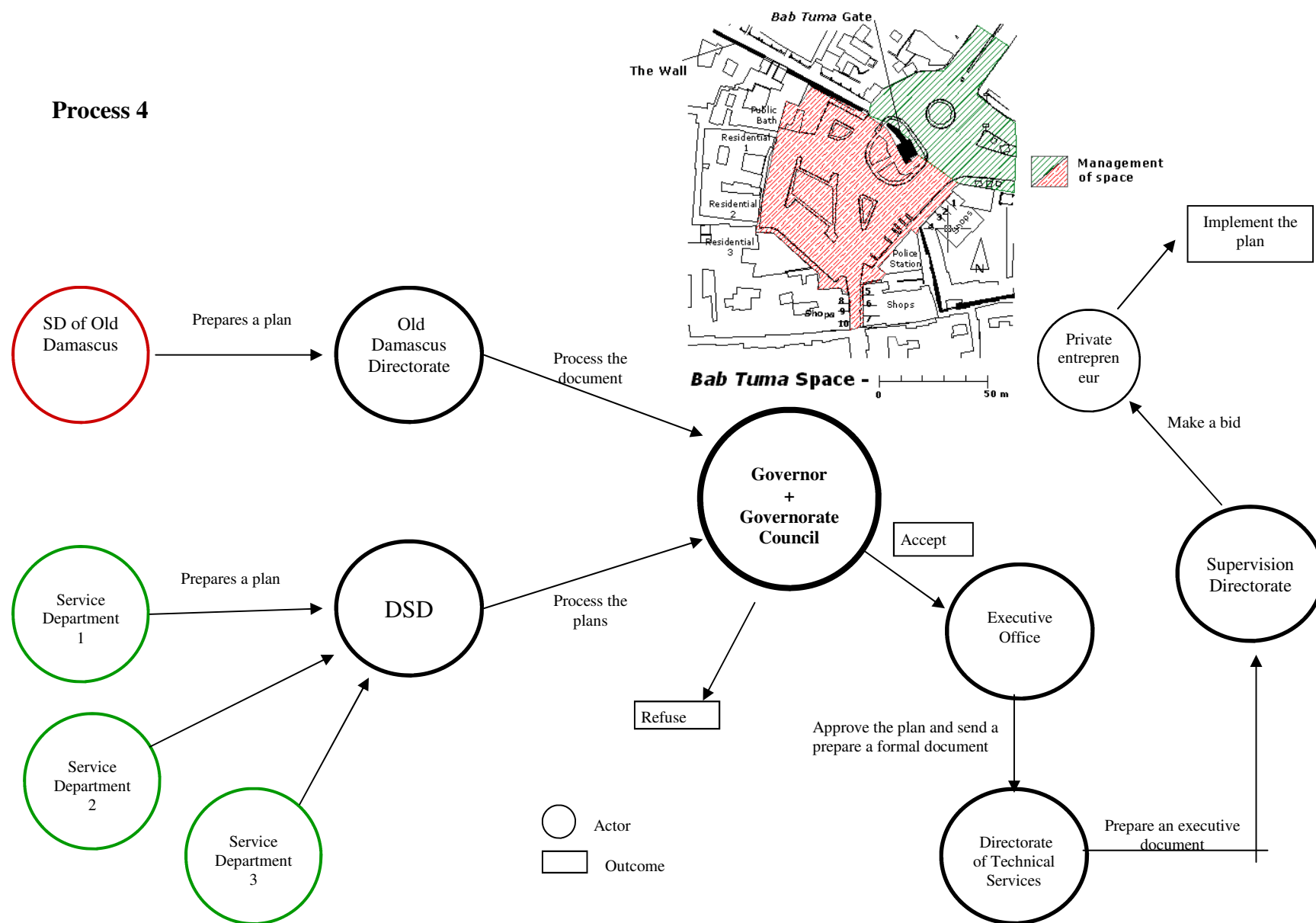


Figure 6.16 The process 4 & product 4.

E. Process 5 initiated by the governor and/ or the director of Old Damascus through LPC

E.1. Analysis of the process

This process is initiated by the Local Protection Committee (LPC), which was established by the central government through a ministerial Decree. The committee is related to the local government but it is an ad hoc organisation. The committee meets upon a request from either the Governor or the director of Old Damascus Directorate. It is responsible for the historic fabric inside and outside the old city. It can propose improvements to the historic fabric including restoration, rehabilitation and renovation of buildings as well as of spaces. Upon agreeing on recommendations, it calls for the relevant directorates to commission a study and execute it. It offers a space for civil society sectors to participate in decision making because it includes a member from the FDA (NGO), the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and a member of the Engineering Syndicate.

E.2. Outcomes

The committee's recommendations could affect the buildings as well as the design aspects of the space. Figure 6.17 shows the process 5, highlighting the aspects related to product that could be affected.

E.3. Limitations and barriers

The involvement of civil society sectors is limited to academic bodies and an NGO but not the community, who only gets involved at a later stage in the process to make objections. However, interviews showed that residents and neighbourhood committee complaints tended to be the forces behind the initiation of the process. An example of this is the regeneration of Straight Street (*Midhat Bash*) Street which was completed in 2008.

This process can change the design of the space, but these changes could be limited because they should adhere to the master plan. Moreover, changing of land use needs a ministerial decree to be implemented. In addition, property ownership can be an obstacle for the development process, because it is difficult to put together sites for development.

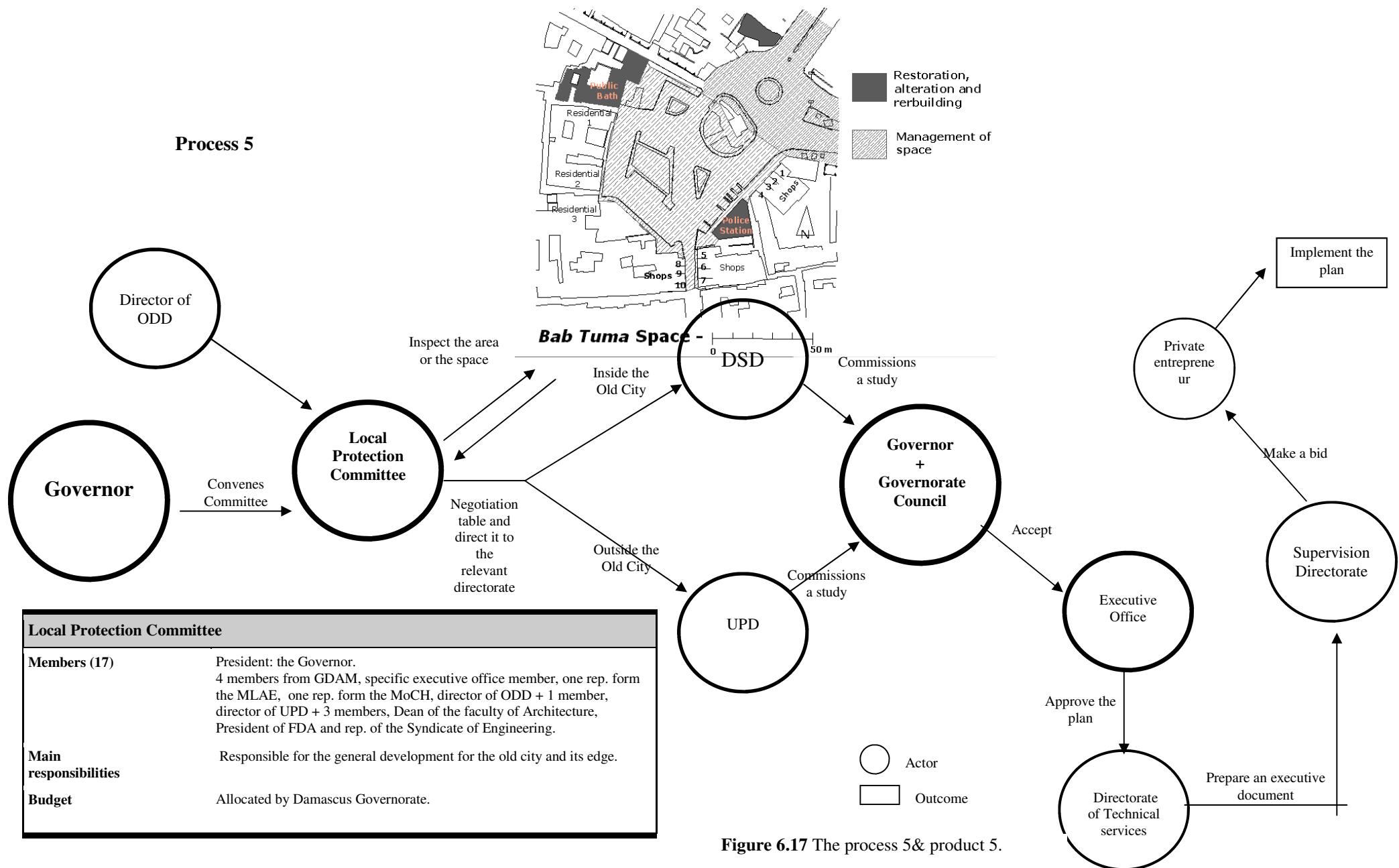


Figure 6.17 The process 5& product 5.

F. Process 6 initiated by the governor through Urban Planning Directorate

F.1. Analysis of the process

This process is initiated by the local authority (the governor) when it designates an area for improvement or regeneration. This is forwarded to UPD or ODD depending on where it is applicable. Sometimes, the directorates' capacity is limited to produce such a plan, so they announce a competition through which many local academic bodies and professional units can participate. An evaluation committee is set up by a decision from the governor to evaluate the proposals and announce a winner. In practice, the relevant directorate (UPD or ODD) prepares the final plan drawing on the proposals presented to be approved by the Governorate Council and Executive Office. The Supervision Directorate leads the implementation phase.

F.2. Outcomes

This process could affect the urban form through the use of the buildings surrounding the space as well as the open space. It has the potential to produce an integrated network of regenerated public spaces within an area, and the proposals from the competition could have the potential to produce successful public spaces. Figure 6.18 shows the process 6, highlighting the aspects related to product that could be affected.

F.3. Limitations and barriers

Involvement of civil society is limited in this scenario to academics and professionals. One barrier that has been highlighted by many interviewees from Governorate departments is that some proposals which could have more desired outcomes on public spaces could be rejected due to limitations in the Governorate's budget.

Process 6

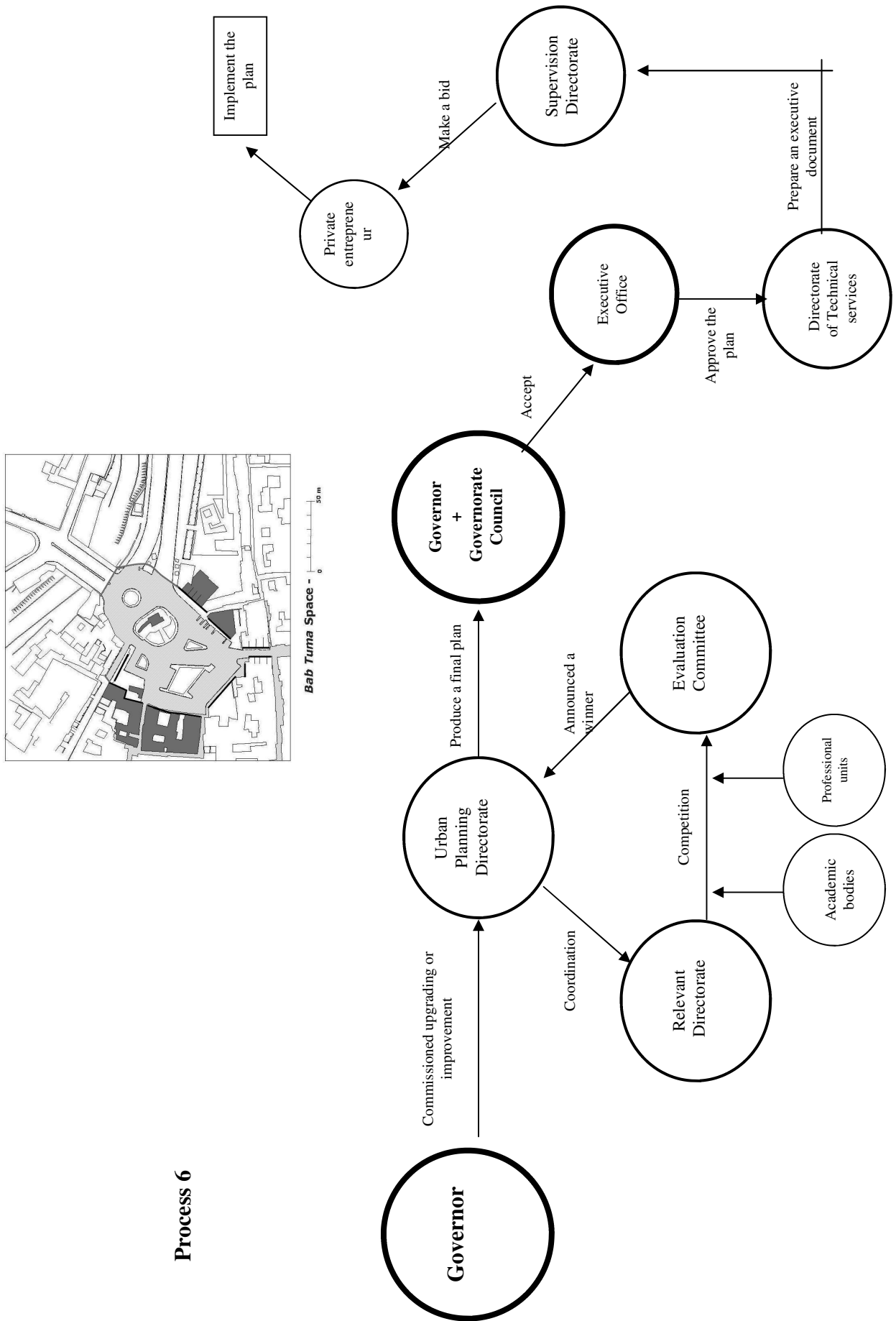


Figure 6.18 The process & product 6.

G. Process 7 initiated by the international donor led regeneration

G.1. Analysis of the process

This process is initiated by the central government when a protocol is signed with an international agency or donor. An office representing the agency works with the relevant directorate – mainly UPD or ODD – to conduct a study for upgrading an area (e.g. MAM's Action Plan for the Old City of Damascus). During preparation of the plan, public preferences are surveyed to be considered in the plan. This plan is approved through the Governorate Council and Executive Office and is implemented by the Supervision Directorate, possibly under the supervision of the donor agency's office.

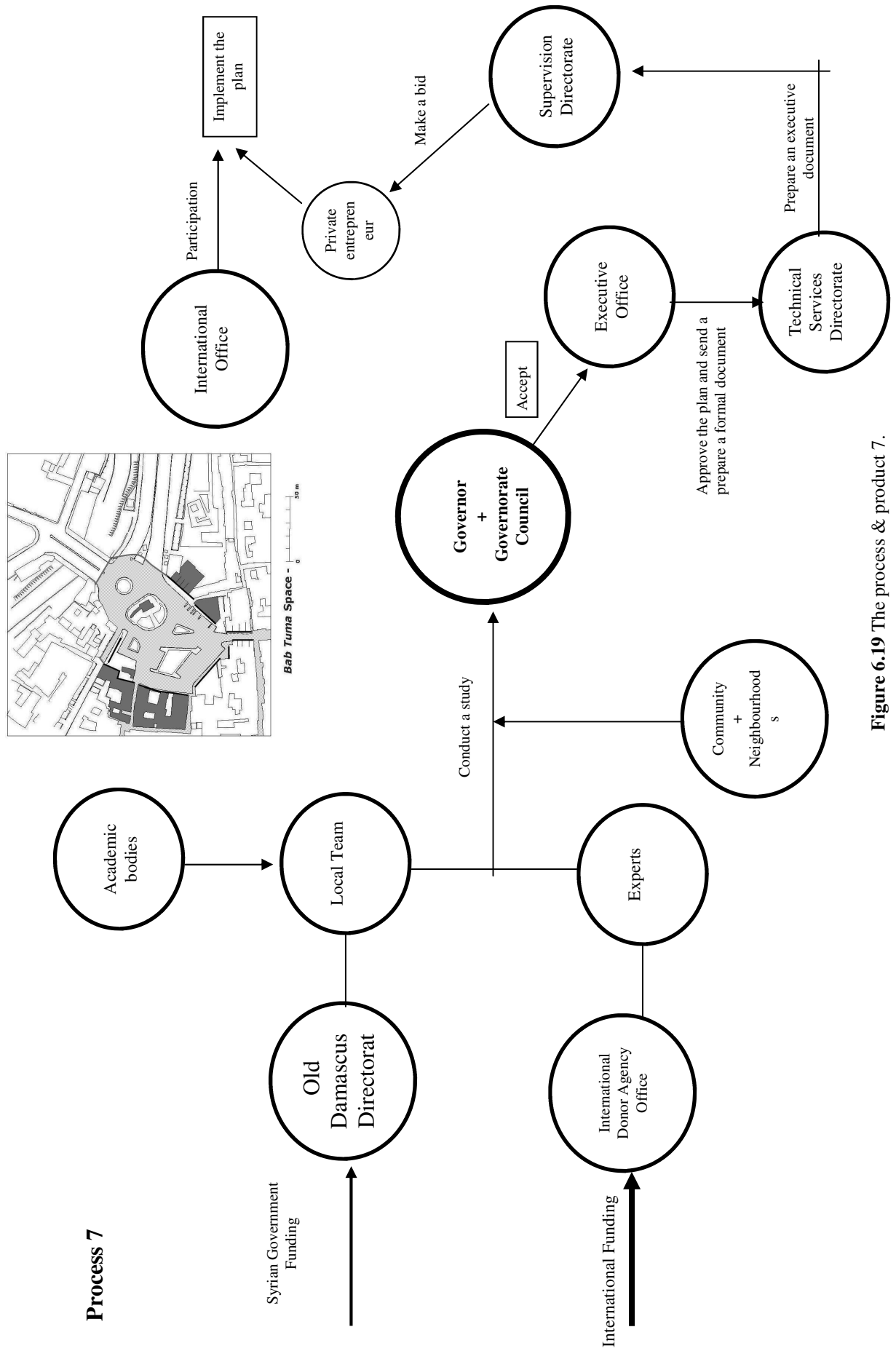
G.2. Outcomes

Potential outcomes from this scenario are the improvement of public space and public realm. Figure 6.19 shows the process 7.

G.3. Limitations and barriers

The main limitation of this scenario is that potential benefits from this project could be limited to the time during which the external donor is involved. This concern was raised by interviewee (No.37) in relation to GTZ's involvement in Aleppo Old City. In addition, rationalities held by international agencies could be different from the needs and values of residents, thus investigating the social role of public space becomes important here.

Process 7



6.6.3 Reflection on the existing instances towards improvement processes

Having analysed the governance process of historic fabric and the abstract processes illustrated above, it is noted that all of these processes have some impact on public space and public realm. Processes 1 and 2, which are initiated by an individual or a group of residents are for private benefit, because they are processes mainly initiated to address a particular resident's complaint or to get license for restoration. Yet, that still has an impact on the public space and public realm, and therefore on public interests and values. Turning one's residence into a restaurant or café invites more people from outside the historic fabric – who are called 'strangers' by one neighbourhood representative (interviewee no. 46). This in turn affects the nature of public space by breaking the hierarchy in space use which existed in the past. On the other hand, restoration of one's residence means going through a very complex process and there are no associated funds for the residents to restore their houses, so people avoid going through such processes unless it is absolutely necessary.

Process 3 explains how neighbourhoods, through *Mokhtars* and neighbourhood committees, participate in a more formalised governance process around public space. Neighbourhood participation happens through meetings at two levels. The first is between *Mokhtars* and neighbourhood committees. The second is between those and representatives from the relevant Service Department (SD) technical directorates. Analysing minutes from one of the second level meetings showed that most of the issues raised are related to management and maintenance of public spaces. In addition, the meeting can discuss issues and concerns related to public realm such as surveillance and safety. One example of this is asking for a police unit to be posted in a public space for safety reasons. This highlights a way of controlling and using public space which is different from the past, in which this way was built through a social and cultural process, taking into account the different layout of public space. Now these processes take more a formalised way. In addition, many interviewees (nos. 41, 45 and 46) highlighted that community participation is still limited in projects and plans happening within their neighbourhoods. These projects and plans are affecting and defining the nature of public space, which was to an extent controlled by the population.

Both processes 3 and 4 highlight the important role of the SD in the governance process at the neighbourhood level. In process 3 it acts as a coordinator between the

neighbourhood's representatives and different governorate's technical directorates. In process 4, its role is also important in the preparation of the improvement plan to the neighbours located within its geographic area of responsibility. However, this role is hindered by limitation both in the possibility to make decisions and also in budgetary issue, as it has no independent budget, as this is allocated by Damascus Governorate, whose budget is in turn allocated by the central government.

Processes 5 and 6 – though they involve few actors, mainly from public authorities – could affect many aspects of the design of the space. Process 5 explains the governance process of the regeneration of Straight Street (*Midhat Bash* Street) completed in 2008. Interviewees no. 22 and 44 explained that this initiative was driven by many residents who had complained about the situation of the waste water system and its faults and through neighbourhood committees complaints since 1998. Due to limitations in the local authority's budget, the project was postponed until at the end of 2007, when the local authority reacted to the complaints and initiated regeneration of the street which included replacing waste water pipes, infrastructure, rehabilitation of buildings facades, renewal of shop doors with wooden doors and redesigning open derelict spaces along the street, including restricting car access. One example is the renewal and redesign of the open space *Al Keshleh* square, which replaced a derelict space. By redesigning this space, it became a focal point where *Bab Tuma* Street meets Straight Street. The researcher's observation showed that this square provides an open space for local community and local shopkeepers to meet and socialise. What hindered the process was the lack of a higher quality study of the area and technical cadres. The project took a long time to be finished, among the disappointment caused to local population (*Dawara*, 2008; *Maalouf*, 2008 and *Rabee*, 2008).

In summary, the analysis of these processes showed that there is no smooth process which could lead to desired the product – i.e. attractive public space. In addition, there is no single agency with an overview of the whole space. LPC could have this overview, but it involves few actors, mainly from public authorities, and lacks financial capacity.

6.6.4 Reflection on Bab Tuma space and Citadel space

In chapter 5 analyses of *Bab Tuma* space and Citadel space are provided. In this chapter, the general governance process was analysed and several scenarios were developed to understand different processes which could happen in relation to public spaces. In this section, the previous analyses along with the scenario approach help understand the situation of *Bab Tuma* and changes happening there.

Process 2 shows the process of restoration and reuse of properties into new use. Restoration of residential property is a complex process with no financial incentives, while turning the property into a restaurant or a café does have some incentive. The accumulation of individual processes which happen within Process 2 help explain the gradual change of use in the district surrounding *Bab Tuma* and the change in the ‘publicness’ of the space.

It is noted that many actors control the governance of *Bab Tuma* space. The space is divided between two service departments and three neighbourhoods. While the space outside the wall responds to one neighbourhood and one Service Department, the space inside the old city responds to two neighbourhoods and one Service Department (all of these different from those for the space outside the wall). Process 3 deals with management and maintenance of public space at neighbourhood level; when it comes to public spaces which span across inside and outside the city wall, their management and maintenance processes are separated into two. Also process 4 shows that annual plans for the whole space are prepared by two separate SDs. The plan for the space inside the wall is prepared by *Bab Tuma* Service Department, approved by the governor and the executive office. The plan for the space outside the wall is prepared by *Saroudja* SD, is gathered with other plans in the Directorate of Service Departments and then approved by the governor and executive office. Again the same process happens within two directorates.

Processes 5 and 6 explain processes which have been initiated to improve the two spaces, but have not been completed. According to some interviewees (Nos.10,11,27&32), many proposals were made for *Bab Tuma* space, but the process stopped when it came to approval (Governor + Governorate Council) because these proposals affected some uses of some buildings or open spaces that were already expropriated for public benefit, as seen by the local authority.

6.7 Key conclusions

This chapter firstly presented and analysed the governance process – actors, rules and rationalities – affecting public space development and regeneration at the city level. Secondly, it developed the possible scenarios of different processes that could affect public spaces at the neighbourhood level. Reflecting on some of these scenarios has helped understand the situation of the two spaces analysed in chapter 5.

The current formal process of governance does not involve a wide range of the concerned actors. It shows a system largely controlled by the central/local government actors. NGOs are very few and have a very limited role in the process. Community has low participation, which is limited to the end of the process of production of a master plan (in between the design and approval stages). Moreover, this participation is questionable because it is to object and not to actually be involved in the design stage, and these objections have to be reviewed by the RTC and approved by the council. It is a long process of conflicts because of the expropriation during master plan implementation. Community is represented by a committee and *Mokhtar* who work on management and maintenance matters of their community and are also concerned about its public realm.

Analysis of the rules of the current process showed that centralisation in the governmental system and limitations in the financial mechanisms, as well as regulations and procedures seen as objectives, are the key issues which affect the governance process and limit the performance of the actors. Processes that could benefit and improve the public space tends to be initiated from above, and they take place in a political and institutional context, which has a great influence on the process. These processes highly define the nature of public space and public realm. Processes initiated from below could only benefit the management and maintenance process of public spaces. Some processes showed separation in administrative procedures and poor coordination.

In relation to rationalities affecting the governance process, no clear vision for the historic fabric in particular outside the city wall was found. Analysis of current practice in Damascus revealed that actors differ sometimes in their perception and attitudes

towards evaluation of historic and symbolic values of public spaces. Besides, the existing approach emphasises the exchange value of public space rather than use and traditional values of the population. Interventions to upgrade public spaces are limited to the pattern of isolated rehabilitation of historical monuments and/or traffic improvements, and do not deal with activities happening within public spaces. Thus they cannot have the desired impact on the historic public realm.

Chapter 7 Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this research was to understand the concept and nature of the public spaces and public realm in the historic city centre of Damascus and their governance processes, in order to achieve a clearer understanding of the potential for improvement of the public spaces and public realm in these areas.

This chapter presents the conclusions reached by this research, which are grouped into three main sections. The first section is a summary of the main findings of this research. In the second part, the key research questions are addressed based on the main findings from the literature review, the survey of Mediterranean cities and the analysis of the case of Damascus. The third section identifies topics for further research.

7.2 Summary of the main findings of the research

This research went through several key stages. These were arriving at the definition of an analytical framework in chapter 2; refining it through reviewing other similar cities experiences in the regeneration of public spaces in historic cores in Mediterranean cities in chapter 4; analysis of the historical evolution and evaluation of public spaces in historic Damascus in chapter 5; and exploration of the governance processes of these spaces at the local level in chapter 6.

Chapter 2 was a review of current published knowledge on the concepts of public space and public realm, their role within the city, dimensions to analyse public space as a 'product' and different approaches to analyse the production and governance processes around public space. It was found that definitions of public space and public realm tend to be conflated in the literature produced by urban designers and planners, while sociologists make a clearer distinction between the two, emphasising the notion of public realm as a social territory.

A significant body of Western literature provides different approaches to analyse public space and the process of producing and managing it. There is a variety of ways to approach public space as a 'product' in order to analyse and understand it. Increasingly the process of producing and managing public space is analysed following an institutional approach through defining the actors (roles, responsibilities and capacities), the rules and the rationalities they use (attitudes and perceptions), and understanding how these are articulated into the built environment.

A review of literature to understand the production of public spaces and public realm in the Mediterranean context was provided in Chapter 4 along with a survey of the experiences of Aleppo, Cairo, Tunis and Barcelona in the regeneration of public spaces in their historic cores. The survey of the background of these cities highlighted that they own valuable historic cores with a long history. It showed that the degradation of public spaces in their historic cores is a common and pressing issue across Mediterranean cities. However, critiques of the regeneration experiences showed that this issue has not been addressed in a holistic way and that, in some cases, more attention has been paid to the physical aspects of public space than to social aspects.

With regard to the process, while the theoretical issues of governance have defined analytically and discussed in Western-based writing, these approaches in fact also underpin practice in urban intervention in the SEMC region – which tends to be donor agency-driven, this being the link to Western literature. Moreover, other analytical work within the SEMC region reinforces the need (stressed by some Western writers) for an emphasis to be put on the wider context in which these processes take place, including how global impacts affect local action. Another key point found from this survey was the importance and usefulness of initiating broader change in governance processes for long term benefits rather than initiating change led by projects with short term benefits.

The survey in Chapter 4 showed that the availability and variety of ways of funding helped the regeneration projects of public spaces become real on the ground. In Barcelona, EU funding and the Olympic Games greatly supported the regeneration process. In the other cities, the international agencies and donors played an important role in providing financial support for the projects, particularly in supporting the local authorities. Technical expertise and knowledge was also one of the most important

aspects in the cases analysed. While a long planning tradition and remarkable planning culture distinguished Barcelona and helped shape its 'way of doing' planning, other cities still rely on imported Western planning approaches.

In chapter 5 the research tried to understand the changes in the nature of public space and its relationship with the public realm in historic Damascus, and its morphological and functional transformations. Chapter 6 looked at the governance process of public space at the city and neighbourhood levels. In post independence and at the country level, Damascus was the capital of Syria, which adopted the approach of state-driven growth through national schemes and the modernist planning paradigm. This approach guided the planning and evolution of city space, which has been far removed from daily realities and, in the case of public space, has mimicked Western public spaces with little consideration of social-cultural specificity.

The change in nature of public space is the product of the different governance processes. At the city level, analysis showed a historical hierarchy in the nature of public space managed and controlled by local people on the basis of strong social and cultural rules. This has been transformed to less hierarchy and more 'publicness' of public space, with the power of the local population over the control of public space decreasing and that of local authority increasing. Rules have been set in place to formalise the way of controlling and governing the public spaces. In recent years these rules have set the stage for two rationalities to become apparent: the rationality predominantly of the local authority emphasising exchange and economic values, while the local population are more interested in maintaining the traditional values of public space.

Public space presents a clash between modernisation and tradition at many levels and in many ways. In this context, modernisation means **new** to local people and tradition means **old** – what they are used to. At the city level, modernity came through colonialism to affect different aspects of public space and public life, shifting the line between public and private spheres, introducing **new** building forms and new types of movements to public space. Public spaces in the historic fabric have developed in response to unique contemporary conditions, which could be summarised in one word: modernisation. Introducing vehicles and electricity (first coming to Damascus in 1907) was an attempt to modernise the mobility system, which was limited originally to

pedestrian and animal movement. Gradually, movement spaces enlarged and experienced new types of movement, thus reducing the possibility and the space for socialising functions. Opening hotels and restaurants is a way to modernise the old city and gave it a new face, but this in turn affects the nature of public space and often exposes what was a parochial realm to increasing numbers of strangers.

In contemporary Damascus, new institutions were introduced to the planning system, and new actors to the governance processes around public spaces. This in turn transformed the rules of governance making these more formal, different from social and cultural rules. Applying master plans was an attempt to modernise the planning system by introducing new tools which were not always applicable to culturally different public spaces.

These were the main findings from the key stages of this research, the following section summarises the answers to the key research questions.

7.3 Answering the main research questions

The conclusions of this research which address the key questions and sub-questions proposed in Chapter 1 can be summarised as follows:

What have been the main theories and approaches towards analysing public spaces as a product and as the result of a process? Is the analytical framework defined on the basis of the review of these applicable to contexts similar to Damascus?

This question focused on the meaning and importance of public space and public realm; concepts to analyse public space as a ‘product’ and concepts of analysing the process of producing public space.

The research process started with the literature review stage in urban design and urban planning areas of literature in order to identify the issues related to public space and public realm as a product and as the result of a process. It appeared through the literature that the definition and meaning of public space and public realm varied between authors who relate the two to physical aspects of the built environment, and those who relate them to physical and social aspects respectively. This research understood that public realm is a broader concept which focuses on people, places,

space and public social life. Public space is one part of public realm, which is an outdoor place, a physical territory which contains socialising functions.

Public space as a product can be analysed following different approaches: morphological, perceptual, social, visual and functional. While the morphological dimension is concerned with urban layout, urban form, configuration and permeability of the space, the functional dimension investigates how the space works. Perceptual, social and visual dimensions are respectively concerned how people perceive, conceive and interact with the space. This research focused on a combination of the morphological and functional approaches, based on understanding public space as an outdoor open place with specific physical configuration which accommodates socialising functions and activities that formulate its urban public life.

The review of these approaches helped define key issues to analyse public space, its role in the city and how it functions within the surrounding environment. These are: urban form, movement and use and activities – which sum up the morphological and functional aspects of public space. These were sub-categorised to include built form, open space, pedestrian movement, vehicular movement, land use on perimeter of open space, use within the open space and activities.

The literature is full of concepts to help analyse the process of managing and controlling public space. Five main approaches were identified as being potentially useful to analyse public space: equilibrium models, event–sequence models, agency models, structure models and institutional models. These could be related to the wider governance processes around public space, looking at the actors involved and their relations at different scales and levels. The institutional approach has been highlighted since the end of 1990s, focusing on institutions – in the state, market and civil society – and their interaction within a wider political economy context. From all of those, actors, rules and rationalities were chosen as a focus for the analysis of the governance processes around public space.

The research questioned the relevance of the conceptual issues defined above and their applicability to the context of Damascus, as well as to similar socio-cultural and geographic contexts. This entailed another review of literature about the product and process of public space in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean context, in order to

advance the knowledge about this context and also to refine and validate the framework for its application to understanding the actual situation in Damascus.

Public realm and public space in SEMC developed through different processes and have been affected by different powers. The historic perspective to analyse public space is dominant in the literature about the cities of SEMC, which focuses on forms, movement and the nature of 'traditional' public spaces in the historic cores of these cities. On the other hand, there is a scarcity of research which focuses on public spaces in the contemporary period, and also a scarcity of research analysing public space from an institutional perspective and looking at how authorities dealing with urban development are operating within the wider political and economic context. Therefore, the framework defined to look at the regeneration processes of the Mediterranean cities proved to be useful to shed some light on these specific episodes. However, the availability of data is very important to be able to apply such a framework effectively.

How have public space and the concept of public realm evolved in historic Damascus and continue to evolve in the contemporary period?

This question focused on the meaning of public realm and public spaces in the historic core of Damascus and its historical development within a political and social context. By doing so, this question also addressed the physical transformation and the changes in the nature of the public spaces located on the edge of the old city, where the old and new meet.

The historical review showed that Damascus was subjected to forms of colonialism for a long time. Public space and public realm have developed under diverse political and socioeconomic circumstances that have affected each period, resulting in a distinctive kind of urban built form and architectural style. Each period introduced **new** changes to public spaces and public realm, and transformations in their nature as well as in their morphological and functional aspects were noted. From regularly shaped open spaces in the Roman period within a main core of public activities and public life, in the Islamic and Ottoman period these changed into an organic form with irregular open spaces which ranged across public, semi-public, semi-private and private in their nature. Public life and social activities were focused in the open spaces of Friday Mosque and Sunday Church as well as in the indoor environment of public baths, *Khans* and *suqs*. The

historic core consisted of private and parochial realms with strong social relations, and movement types were limited to pedestrians and animals, thus the possibility for socialising activities and movement seemed to coexist in open spaces. All of these were the 'product' of the strong impact of culture and social rules as well as economic and environmental factors.

Modernity started to emerge in the West from the 1500s, arriving in Damascus through colonialism to affect its public places and public realm. These were expressed through the expansion and opening out of the city's layout, with new types of public space and public realm. Theatres, cinemas and public cafes were new to old Damascus. Squares, avenues, boulevards and parks were new in terms of public space form. Modernisation in movement types contributed to subordinating these new forms to the movement of increasingly fast vehicles, thus altering movement and social spaces. The nature of these spaces also altered through the increased numbers of new incomers ('strangers') from the expanded areas surrounding the old city. Some socialising activities which historically tended to take place in private spaces opened up to become noticeable in these new spaces. These transformations in public spaces and public realm were the 'product' of new governance processes involving new actors who operate within more formalised management and control rules.

The post independence period started with difficult political circumstances and socio-economic pressures. These led to Damascus taking a statist approach coupled with a modernist vision for the country. National programmes and master planning have been the tools for this approach. In this period the transformation of public space has taken a dramatic turn, which can be seen in the layout of open spaces becoming undefined, fragmented. The enlargement of movement space interfered with social interaction and there has been a change in the hierarchy of the nature of open spaces from public, semi-public, semi-private and private spaces. The qualitative assessment of the selected public spaces revealed that these changes have taken place with the transition of the historic core from being a mainly residential quarter to becoming an area accommodating many economic and touristic activities, which have in turn attracted a lot of traffic movement.

These selected public spaces manifest the conflict between two broader concepts: modernisation and tradition. Attempts to modernise the historic fabric by opening hotels and restaurants, showing monuments by demolishing the physical containers of some of its private and parochial realms to widen its irregular streets – all of these clashed with the traditional values and meanings still held by inhabitants of these spaces. Interventions to upgrade and redesign the spaces happened under a modernist vision holding different cultural and social values. Defining the main actors concerned with these spaces, those involved in managing these spaces at the local level, and how they are interact with other actors, and defining the resources they have and the rationalities they use to upgrade them are the issues that the third key research question addressed, which is:

What is the process that produces the current public spaces in the historic fabric of Damascus?

The main and dominant actors in the process are the national and local authorities, who mostly initiate, design and implement the regeneration process. At the local level, Damascus Governorate is the local government actor which supervises the governance activity of public spaces through its technical directorates, which design the plan; its council and executive office, which make decisions about it; and its directorate, which implements it. Other actors include a limited range of NGOs, residents, community members, shopkeepers, academics, and professionals. Their involvement is institutionalised, though; limited room is available for their participation in the governance process.

The rules of the governance processes consist of an institutional setting which appears to make the process overly complex. The analysis of the governance processes around public space in Damascus showed that the combination of old laws, rigid regulations and long procedures constitute an institutional setting that hampers the process. Centralisation in decision making and financial matters (Damascus Governorate gets most of the funding from the national government with very few and limited revenues from other funding sources), conflicts caused by planning laws, division between administrative units managing public spaces in the historic fabric and their geographic location of responsibilities, all of these make the rules difficult and complex.

Actions to upgrade open spaces in the historic fabric are fragmented and focus on the rehabilitation of monuments. Damascus Governorate still heavily relies on the Ecochard master plan 1968 when proposing projects. The wall that has been a regulator of public-private life throughout the history of the city appears to play a considerable role in compartmentalising the governance process. Emphasis on different values – exchange, use, symbolic, traditional and social values – varies among different actors, with the local authority emphasising exchange values more than traditional values. There appears to be a lack of awareness of the spatial qualities of open spaces and poor attention to the socialising activities happening within these spaces.

Analysis of specific possible processes (scenarios) showed that these are hampered by a combination of reasons related to centralisation in decision making and/or financial channels, the poor coordination between different actors involved and/or limitations of financial resources and technical expertise. There is no one scenario which approaches public spaces in a comprehensive way, the closest to this being the scenario of international donor participation, but with some dangers which will be highlighted in the answer to the next question.

How are other similar Mediterranean cities' experiences relevant to Damascus and what lessons do these hold for the improvement of public spaces in historic Damascus?

This question focused on the relevance of the analysis of the process of public space regeneration in the selected Mediterranean cities to the case of Damascus, and also on possible solutions for Damascus.

The major lesson from these experiences is that upgrading of open spaces is a process rather than a product. Political support and commitment are two major conditions for initiating the process. Three key points came up from the survey of these cities' experiences in the regeneration of their public spaces: the importance of a wider change in the governance process, including the planning system, to allow wider participation from the actors; the importance of having expertise and planning tradition; and the crucial point of the availability of financial resources to initiate such processes. These are necessary but not sufficient to produce the desired 'product'. These experiences

showed that there is a constant need to question the social role of the public space within the community and for what means it is used.

Damascus shares many similarities with the selected Mediterranean cities. It experienced dualism in its development, social segregation in its historic core with degradation of its public spaces. So what could these key points mentioned above suggest for Damascus?

Damascus could get help and aid from external agencies and donors, but at the same time Damascus should develop her own approaches responding to local needs and problems. Currently there is an opportunity for this as Damascus is experiencing a transition period in political, economic and social life that offers possibilities for change in the governance process, including the planning systems and community involvement. This is further discussed in the following section.

7.4 Recommendations and possible directions of change in Damascus

There is no one answer which could meet the overall aim of this research (and its specific key objective 5), which is to explore the potential for improvement of public spaces in the historic city centre of Damascus. However, the analysis in chapters 4, 5 and 6 provided some starting points to seek such an answer. Chapter 4 it highlighted the importance of a wider change in the nationwide governance processes in order to achieve benefits in the long term. The political economy of Syria and the mechanisms of the planning system and the significance of old Damascus as a world heritage site, each provides a part of the answer.

However, the starting point to seek such an answer is to accept that achieving sustainable urban development is a political issue, and to recognise regeneration of the historic city centre as an essential component and a priority in the national strategy for developing the built environment. Such a start could be supported by changes in the local government system because, as the analysis in chapter 6 showed, there is a democratic deficit within the system. This issue was stressed by Carley *et al.* (2001, p.196) as needing to be overcome in order to achieve sustainable development. One option to achieve this is to reform the local planning system in order to integrate

planning at the neighbourhood public spaces level and allow wider participation and governance.

Wider governance means strengthening the weak role of some actors and/or introducing new actors to the governance process. In the case of Damascus, community and residents have practically no role, while NGOs and neighbourhood committees have a weak role. These are important to be considered and be taken forward within the reform process. Their empowerment through public participation on an institutional basis should be a uniform policy throughout the local authority, not a temporary or a special case. Also the community 'need to be put back on the map', a matter which is considered a challenge by the local authority as they are required to begin to "share the responsibility and power over city-planning process and urban service delivery functions with residents of the neighbourhoods of the city" (Carley *et al.*, 2001, p.195).

In relation to actors in the governance process at the local level, chapter 6 showed that local residents are aware of their public realm but the way their views are expressed is through the channel of appointed *Mokhtars* and residents' committee members. The nature of their appointment does not guarantee that the diversity of views in the neighbourhood will be reflected in the process. In addition, they have 'their say' in a formal way and at the end of the process. The maintenance problems of the neighbourhood are reported by the committee and the *Mokhtar*, who are appointed by local government on the basis of good reputation among their neighbours. These have no budget.

Another actor whose strengthening could benefit public spaces is the Service Department, which could work with communities in their neighbourhoods rather than just coordinating between these and the higher local authority. This could be achieved through some degree of decentralization of decision-making and funding to Services Departments, to become mini governorates within Damascus Governorate.

The possible mechanisms that could help make changes and improve actors' performance in the governance process can be summarised as:

- Empowerment of neighbourhoods associations and putting them on the 'planning map', through :
 - Election of the Neighbourhood Committees.
 - The possibility of allocating budgets to the activities of the Neighbourhood Committees.
 - The local authority recognising neighbourhoods as being on 'the map' and allocating and delegating tasks and budgets.
- Establishment of an Urban Design Office (UDO) to work with the service departments in the 15 Damascus districts. Professional and local architects who live in the same neighbourhood and/or from private practice could work in this office and collaborate with services departments.
- Public/private/community partnerships.

In terms of capacities, several questions need to be answered such as, do people know what might be possible? Do they have access to information? Do they know what their own capacities are? Do they know what external resources are available? Is there sufficient freedom for people to work together? There is a great need to promote education and public awareness by making expertise and advice available, and organising seminars and other events and activities.

The existing 'top-down' decision-making process could be coupled with an ascending 'bottom-up' approach, which needs strengthening. This would allow emphasising the principle of shared responsibilities, and therefore increasing the feeling of urban solidarity. There is a great need to prepare a development plan within a comprehensive and flexible planning system which defines objectives and strategies rather than regulations and procedures – a planning approach concerned with the various aspects of urban regeneration of the historic fabric. Improvements to the laws might include deregulation: fewer rules, a lighter administrative burden, shortened procedures, and even the cutting out of certain procedures altogether. So, for example, MAM's (2006) initiative in Damascus emphasises implementation by introducing a new type of plan:

the 'Action Plan'. The overall objective of the Action Plan will be to assist in creating changed planning concepts, processes and mechanisms.

Indeed, Syria and Damascus are currently experiencing a reform process, a process that has actually started to take place with the efforts being made by the MLAE and MAM programme. This process involves working towards reforming the urban planning system through issuing a new law defining neighbourhood associations Law 55/2002, updating the law of producing master plans 5/1982 with a new version 41/2002, and currently updating the law of local administration 15/1971 to consider election of the governors with the same mandate period as the governorate council. Also a report has been prepared by the MAM project⁴⁴ which addresses two matters: the need for a fundamental rethink and reform of urban planning laws; and the need for an urban transformation law to provide the legal framework for regenerating and regularising informal settlements. In addition it proposes to build up expertise and develop skills through the creation of a centre of Excellence in Training and Development for Local Government and through other training and information programmes (MAM, 2007).

In the analysis of the governance process, perception and attitudes towards the historic fabric generally and public spaces and public realm seem to be important. Moreover, a public space with historic, architectural and other heritage values carries additional assets in terms of space quality and added value for their contemporary use for both residential and commercial purposes. So how should old public spaces resort to contemporary languages? In the future, there is a need to define a clear vision of the end product or result, both at the city level and down to the smaller scale. Who will benefit from the regeneration of the historic Damascus: Actors who consider the historic fabric as an economic asset emphasising its exchange value? World citizens who value historic and cultural authenticity and variety? Damascenes who live in the historic core and wish to preserve traditional value? Or tourists, whether foreign or Arab, in groups or as individuals, who will visit Damascus?

In addition, historical monuments should not be restored on their own, but need to continue to take part in the wider setting of public space and most importantly should look at how this will contribute to the public realm active life. The renovation of open

⁴⁴ The report was prepared by Patrick McAuslan, international urban planning legal expert, in Action Plan 9 of the MAM project during a mission to Syria in 2008.

spaces in the historic fabric of Damascus should set as an objective activating their role within the urban system as a whole while improving and taking advantage of the features that distinguished each one from another: its proximity to the centre, ease of access, its historic value, its economic and social characteristics, the diversity of uses and previous activities carried out in it, etc.

At the smaller scale, a clear understanding of how open spaces are to be utilised within the community and as well as the whole area, and how they can be brought back to full use, will be essential if they are to serve civic purposes effectively and be maintained properly over time. The next step is to observe the public spaces in historic Damascus to see how they are used and survey residents' and users' preferences and priorities in order to propose improvements which based on their views and are compatible with the land use plan. By doing so, an attempt would be made to enlarge social space and think more about socialising activities happening within public space.

7.5 Future research

As well as responding to research questions, this investigation raises new ones for further research in relation to public space and public realm as a 'product' and the governance processes around these, within the geographic context of Damascus and SEMC historic cities. Further research and deeper probing into public spaces and processes of their governance is needed around the cities of the Mediterranean to allow more detailed comparative studies.

Damascene society is also going through a quick pace of social change, so new types of lifestyle with new forms of public life and new types of public spaces are emerging. So an important emerging question is for whom are the spaces in social terms and what role can they play in modern societies? This entails surveying users' preferences and their perceptions and attitudes towards public spaces and public realm. It calls for deeper research into the nature of public space and socio-cultural transformations. With new types of public space, new processes happen and the key aspects of the actors, rules and rationalities developed in chapter 2, in addition to the scenario tool used in chapter 6 to visualise such processes, aim to provide a structure for the exploration of these processes.

Finally public spaces in the historic city centre demonstrated the tension between old and new, between tradition and modernisation. The current governance practices are the result of the statist approach and modernist paradigm, with the role of public authority in controlling and managing these spaces remaining essential. With the transition period that the country is witnessing in an age of globalisation, how is Damascus going to mediate between local and global forces that shape urban space? Is there an ideal balance to be reached? If so, what forms will the governance processes around public space take and what actors will benefit from these?

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